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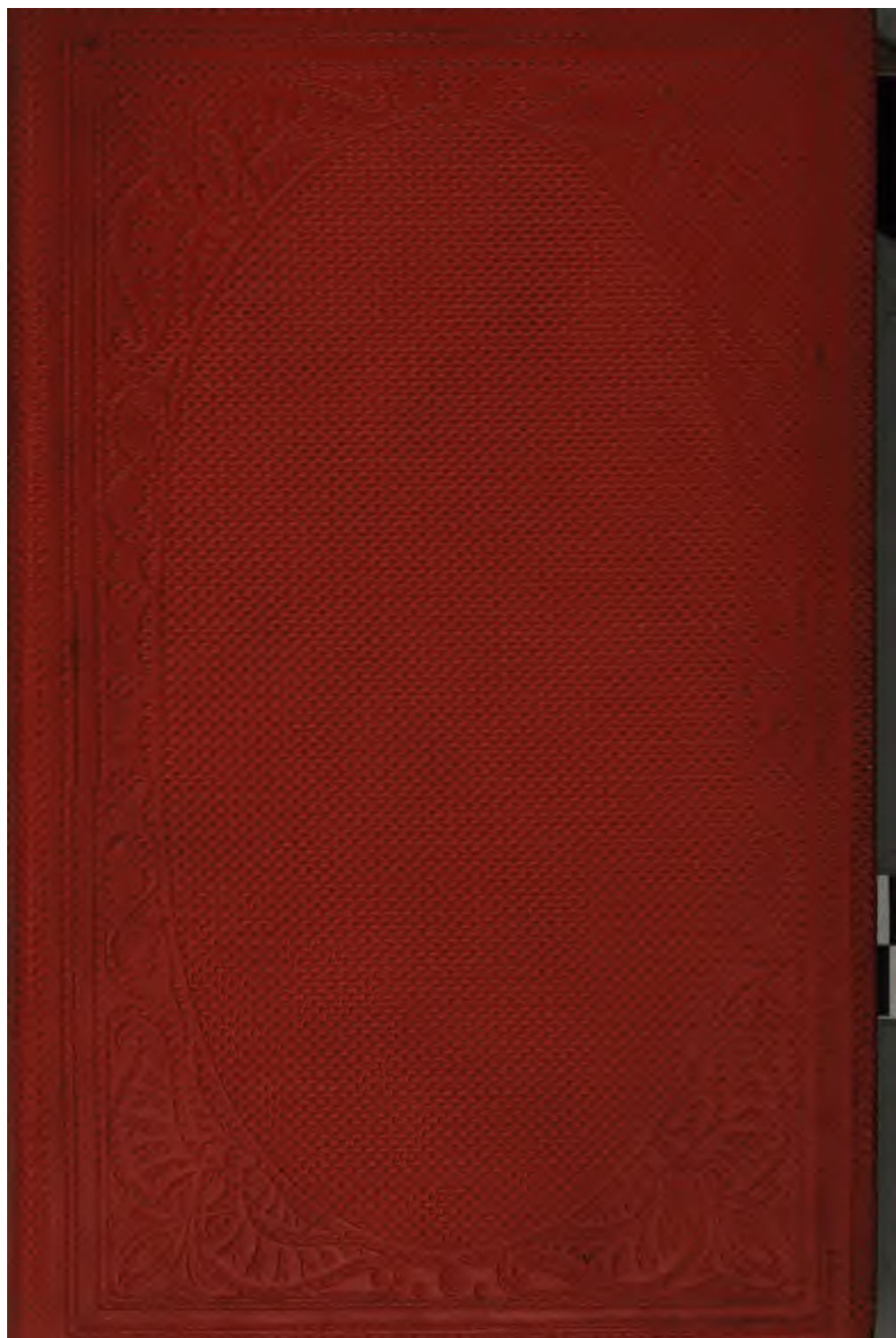
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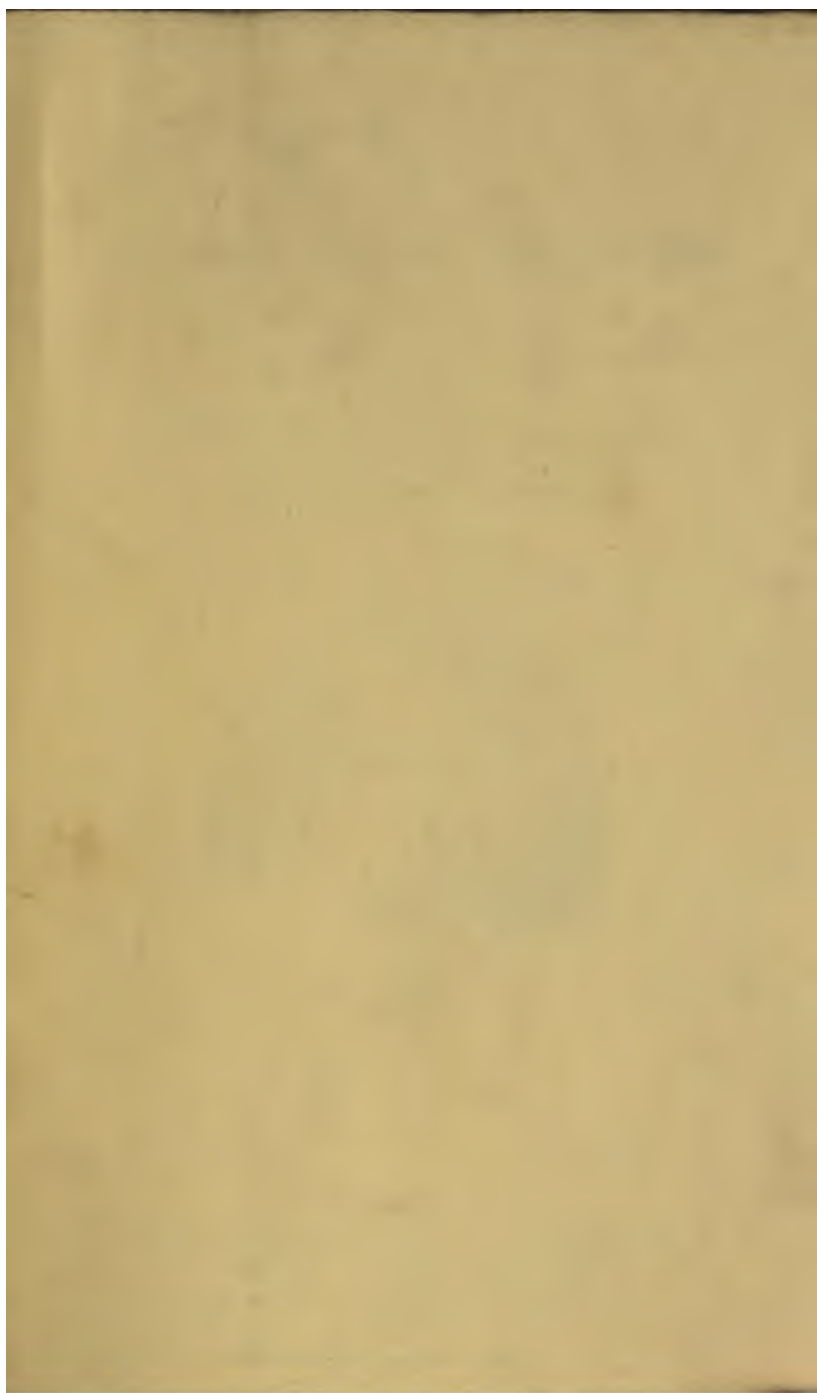
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THE  
ENGLISHWOMAN IN ITALY:

IMPRESSIONS OF LIFE

IN THE

ROMAN STATES AND SARDINIA,  
DURING A TEN YEARS' RESIDENCE.

By MRS. G. GRETTON.



PIUS IX.

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
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THE  
ENGLISHWOMAN IN ITALY.

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CHAPTER I.

Departure from Florence—The Vettura—Inn among the Apennines — General aspect of towns in Romagna—Causes of their decay—Austrian Officers at Forli—Dangers of the road—First impressions of Ancona.

THREE or four years ago, I enjoyed an opportunity such as very rarely falls to the lot of strangers, of becoming acquainted with the inner life and customs of a part of the Italian peninsula comparatively little visited,—untrodden ground, in fact, to the majority of English tourists. An invitation from my uncle, an English merchant at Ancona, the principal seaport of the Roman States on the Adriatic, to spend

a few months there with his family, was gladly accepted. My experiences of Italy as yet consisted only of a gay winter in Florence, and the Holy Week at Rome; and I was still young and enthusiastic enough to hail with delight any proposal which tended to increase my acquaintance with the country that had so much enchanted me. It was therefore with a light heart I found myself, one lovely autumnal morning, the fourth in a *vettura*, having been confided to the care of an English family who were going to Ancona, in order to embark from thence for the Levant.

I had never travelled in a *vettura* before, and I thought the lumbering, crazy old vehicle, with its high, narrow step, small windows, hard seats, and peculiar smell of mouldering straw, quite novel and refreshing; and the four lean horses, with their gay tufts of scarlet worsted and bells, the *vetturino* or driver himself, with his pipe and blouse and low-crowned hat, seemingly devoid of all human sympathy save for a mongrel quadruped, which alternately

formed the apex of the pyramid of boxes and carpet-bags upon the roof, or limped dolorously in the rear—all promised me an inexhaustible store of amusement, even for the four days which the journey was to employ.

Soon after leaving Florence the road begins to ascend; and before twenty miles were over we found ourselves in the defiles of a magnificent mountain-pass, and in a temperature of exceeding coldness. That night we stopped at an inn amongst the Apennines, and it would be difficult to convey an idea of the contrast its rude inhabitants and miserable accommodation afforded to the luxury of Florence, which lay behind us. The people of the house spoke in some uncouth dialect it was impossible to understand—the Romagnole patois, I was afterwards told—and looked so savage and repelling, that one involuntarily recalled all the stories of robbery and assassination with which the neighbouring country had been so rife a few months before. They all, old as well as young, stared at us as if

we had been wild beasts; and from the time we arrived till supper could be got ready, and the rough hostess prevailed on to make our beds, there was an incessant coming and going of spectators. They gave us some soup, which, to our English palates, appeared nothing but warm water with a little coarse vermicelli in it, followed by the miserable fowl of which the broth had been made, with its head on, and inefficiently plucked; and then an omelet—the last being an invaluable accessory to such repasts. It was bitterly cold, and we asked for a fire; a large bundle of fagots was brought and lighted in a huge chimney, almost roomy enough to contain settles, like those of olden time. The flame soon kindled cheerily, and cast a bright glow over the squalid room, with its filthy, unwashed brick floor; an open cupboard, containing the available crockery of the establishment; six rush-bottomed chairs, so dirty that we were fain to cover them with our handkerchiefs; and placed upon the shelf, that served as a mantel-piece, two broken

figures in coloured plaster of Paris, representing a valorous Greek leering rapturously at a rubicund Zuleika opposite.

We had time to notice all these details, to count the rafters of the cobwebbed ceiling, to become familiarized with the barefooted urchins who gazed curiously at us from the threshold, ere the requisite preparations for our sleeping apartments were completed, and the slipshod landlady informed us that we were at liberty to retire to rest. But, fortunately, before allowing her to depart, we remembered a caution that had been given us, to be particular in inspecting the bed-linen; and thence ensued a dispute as to the perfectly-unsullied state of that which was first assigned to us. Seeing us determined on rejecting her sheets, she at last made a sullen gesture to her daughter, who soon reappeared with another supply, whose freshness compensated for the nutmeg-grater texture of the homespun hemp of which they were made.

We mounted upon chairs to climb up into our beds, and then had all sorts of



laughing alarms at the strange noises that seemed to pervade the house: the gruff voice of the vetturino and stable-boys, the stamping and snorting of the horses which were located beneath us, and the screams of another unhappy fowl, immolated for the refection of a fresh party of travellers, whose arrival about midnight completely disturbed the short interval that remained to us for repose. At three o'clock we were called, and shivering, sleepy, and miserable, made a hasty toilet, and hurried to the carriage; it being one of the peculiar delights of this mode of travelling, that inasmuch as the entire journey is performed with the same horses, the day is divided into two stages, morning and afternoon, and the driver's object is to insure as long a rest, or *rinfrascata*, between these as possible. Thus, often long before noon, one stops for three or four hours of ennui and discomfort, such as the uninitiated in these matters can with difficulty conceive.

- 4 It was of course dark when we set off, and by the time day had fully dawned, we

had emerged from the mountains, and were in a broad, fertile country, approaching the boundary-stone that separates Tuscany from the Roman States. A custom-house on each territory is of course encountered; the Tuscans first see that you carry nothing contraband out, and then the Romans ascertain that you take nothing forbidden in. With us, the examination of our luggage was merely nominal; offering the keys of our boxes, with the assurance that they contained nothing illegal, they were immediately and politely returned to us; and thus the magic of our English name, seconded by the donation of a few *pauls*, carried us in triumph through both ordeals. To the Italians themselves it is a very different sort of affair, as they are always subjected to a very rigorous search, chiefly with a view to discovering whether they are carrying arms or prohibited publications.

About ten, we reached Forli—the first of those large, deserted, decaying cities which are to be met with at every fifteen or twenty miles' distance in the Roman States, and

which, in their grass-grown streets, their ruined palaces, and ragged, idle population, give a more striking testimony to the workings of the dominant system than the most heart-stirring eloquence could achieve. As we sauntered through the dreary town, to while away the hours that must elapse before we could resume our journey, we saw no evidences of industry or employment beyond a few wretched shops, where tobacco, cigars, tape, needles, and such gear were promiscuously sold. The necessity for a trifling purchase led me into one of these *negozi*, the owner of which, a garrulous old man, upon discovering that I was English, and yet not indifferent to the state of things around me, speedily ventured on a few confidential lamentations. The miserable condition of the country he ascribed, not so much to the presence of the Austrians, who had been stationed in Romagna and the Marche\* since 1849, disastrous as that occu-

† The term Marches of Ancona (in Italian La Marca, or Le Marche) is derived from *Marchesato*, or Marquisate.

pation undoubtedly was, as to the injustice and venality of all the government officials, with whom, he observed, "a little of this," rubbing his fore and middle finger significantly against his thumb, to denote money, "a little of this does everything. They are all alike, *Signora mia*, from the lowest *impiegato* to the high personage who rules the Pope as well as his subjects." I was conversant enough with Italian politics to know that he alluded to Cardinal Antonelli, of whose wide-spread unpopularity amongst the commercial and industrial classes I thus early had a specimen. "All is falling to pieces, *Signora*," he added, as he handed me my parcel, wrapped in the leaf of an old account book; "but who can wonder at it? *We are governed by men who have no children.*"

The only place where any of the natives seemed to congregate was one of the cafés, in and outside of which we observed numbers of fine, well-grown young men, indolently lounging and smoking, or staring at any stray passer-by with a vacant sort of

interest; and all these were the rising generation — the gentry and nobility of Forli. I say *one* of the cafés advisedly, because another that was pointed out to us near the theatre was occupied solely by Austrian officers, and consequently unfrequented by any of the citizens. Priests, soldiers, and beggars straggled about the streets, the last besieging chiefly the cafés and church doors, and exhibiting their withered limbs and deformities as an incentive to the compassion of the charitably disposed. Near the chief square, and evidently the fashionable locality, we saw one or two ladies, followed by a dirty lackey, in a threadbare livery-coat hanging down to his heels, with a faded gold band round his hat, and altogether with such an air of poverty and squalor as rendered this attempt at maintaining traditional dignity pitifully ridiculous. The only public building that looked flourishing, or in good repair, was the theatre, which subsequent observations have shown me to be the case in most, if not in all towns in the Papal States. At

Cesena, for instance, which was our next halting-place, a new opera house, scarcely yet completed, was shown to us, on the erection of which the municipality — of course with the approbation of the government at Rome — had expended a very large sum; while the town bore the semblance of a vast lazar-house, its unsheltered poor, in every variety of human wretchedness, lying huddled together by night beneath porticos and arcades, and by day shocking every sense by the display of their wounds, nakedness, and suffering.

But I am digressing, and must return to Forli, and to our hotel of La Posta, where we dined in a very large hall that must have been a banqueting-room centuries ago. Our places were laid at one end of a long table, the other extremity of which was soon occupied by several white-coated Austrian infantry officers, belonging to the Army of Occupation. They came in, clanking their swords and speaking in a loud, overbearing tone, evidently being in the habit of frequenting the house, to judge by

the free-and-easy manner in which they comported themselves. They were fortunately too far off for us to be annoyed by overhearing their conversation, except when they raised their voices to abuse the waiters, which they did in execrable Italian, but with a surprising volubility of expletives. These remarks were generally prefaced with, "*Voi pestia d'Italiano*," or something equally remarkable for good taste and feeling. But this was nothing to what occurred about the middle of the repast, when a party of Italians, two ladies and a gentleman, evidently of the upper class, our fellow travellers at the mountain-inn, entered the hall, and sat down opposite to us, waiting till their dinner should be brought; for each party was separately served.

Though they spoke low, and with an evident desire to avoid notice, the Austrians speedily discovered to what nation they belonged, as I perceived by their whispering and laughing amongst themselves, and frequent bold glances towards the new-comers. After a little time their mirth grew more

offensive, and reached an unwarrantable height, when one of the party, loudly apostrophizing the unfortunate waiter on whom their wrath so frequently descended, asked him if he could tell him in what light he and all other Austrians regarded the Italians. The man's sallow cheek grew a shade paler, but he made no reply, as he busied himself in changing their plates and knives, making as much clatter as possible—so it seemed to me—to drown the voice of his interrogator. “Do you not know, *pestia?*” reiterated the officer, stamping as he spoke; “then I will tell you: we all of us look upon you Italians as the dust under our feet—as the little creeping beasts we crush every moment of our lives, at every step we take—ha! ha! ha!” And then they all roared in chorus, and swore, and twirled their moustaches, and called for coffee and cigars.

I cannot describe what I felt during this scene, for the cruel outrage on the feelings of the family who sat opposite to us. When the insult was too palpably proclaimed to



admit of a doubt, the brow of the gentleman grew dark and lowering, and I saw by the strong heavings of his chest, and firmly-compressed lips, what bitter, unavailing struggles were at work. The ladies exchanged glances; and the younger of the two who sat beside him, and whom I afterwards discovered to be his wife, laid her hand upon his arm, and looked up imploringly into his face. I never shall forget the look — indignation, sorrow, entreaty, were all so blended there. He shrank from her touch, as if irritated at a movement that might call further attention to his position; but the moment afterwards, seeming to recollect himself, he whispered a few words into her ear, accompanying them with a slight movement of the shoulders, with which an Italian always indicates helplessness or despair.

We left Forli as early as half-past one, although Cesena, our halting-place for the night, was only thirteen miles off; but the vetturino told us he was anxious to reach it long before sunset, as the neighbourhood

bore a very bad name, and carriages were often stopped and robbed at dusk or early morning. In the mountains, where we had been the night before, he told us there was no fear—nothing unpleasant, in fact, ever being known to take place till beyond the Tuscan frontier. These precautions made us rather uneasy, and it was some comfort to perceive that the Italian family set out at the same time as ourselves, and that the two carriages always kept within sight of each other; but no evil befell us—though, in less than a week afterwards, a carriage was stopped on the same road in open daylight—and we jingled gallantly into Cesena, in the mellow sunlight of the October afternoon.

As I am not going to give a journal of our route, but have merely attempted a sketch that might convey some idea of the state of the country which we traversed, I shall hasten over the two following days. We passed through Rimini, La Cattolica, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia—all names which once belonged to history, but now may be briefly classed in the same category of ruin

and debasement—and found ourselves, at the close of the fourth day, in sight of the place of our destination—Ancona, the third city in the Roman States.

It is approached by a beautiful road which follows the curve of the bay from the opposite point of Capo Pesaro, and, built upon a promontory that runs boldly into the sea, can be descried from a considerable distance. The first impression the aspect of Ancona produces upon the traveller is favourable in the extreme. It had been visible to us for the last twenty miles of our road, and looked exceedingly picturesque, rising from the very edge of the water in terrace-like succession, till it reached the summit of the mountain, crowned by an old cathedral, whose quaint semi-Byzantine architecture, gilded by the setting sun, stood out in admirable relief against the glorious sky.

The shipping in the harbour lay calmly at anchor, every detail of mast and cordage reflected as in a mirror in the azure sea, which, in the distance, verging on the horizon, appeared suffused with the same

golden light as the illuminated heavens. It was a beautiful scene, one of which I thought I should never weary; and although, from what I had seen upon the way, I had schooled myself into a considerable abatement of the anticipations with which I had quitted Florence, I now permitted my hopes to revive, and drew good auguries from the prepossessing exterior of Ancona.

As we drew near, we saw more indications of employment than we had yet encountered : heavy wagons, laden with bales of merchandise, proceeding slowly in the direction from which we came ; and carts of a most primitive construction, painted with rude figures of saints, and drawn by white oxen or cows, conveying the produce of the recent vintage into the town. Leading to the gates was an avenue of trees, planted on either hand or the post-road, and under whose shade the population were wont to disport themselves for their Sunday's promenade ; but the finest had been all cut down a few years before, to make barricades against the Austrians when they were advancing to besiege the town,

and their stumps alone remained. On the side nearest the sea appeared some little square patches of shrubs and flowers, interspersed with a few benches, and four terra-cotta urns on pedestals, dignified by the name of the Public Gardens; and on the opposite part of the road was a long row of very miserable houses, with arcades, beneath which venders of fruit, salt-fish, and coarse pottery held their stalls.

On we went through a handsome gate, where the usual formalities of passports had to be endured; and then along a sunny sort of esplanade, with the sea on one side and dirty houses on the other; and through a low narrow archway in a huge blank wall, and we were fairly in Ancona, the Doric city, as it is admiringly called by its inhabitants. The vetturino cracked his whip, the horses did their best to gallop, the dog barked, and we plunged and jolted through the steep, narrow streets in right good style, till we drew up in front of the hotel of La Pace, the Meurice's of Ancona.

## CHAPTER II.

Description of the Palazzo—An English family, though Italian born—Complimentary visits of the Anconitan nobility—How they pass their time—Dislike to country walks—Modern *Cavaliere Servente*.

OUR arrival apparently had been expected, for two or three half-naked, black-bearded porters or *facchini*, who had acted as our running-footmen from the gate, now shouted, as soon as they came within hearing, that the Nipote del Signor Carlo was come; and instantly there was a rush made by some boys who were lounging before the inn in the direction opposite. Meanwhile, a bevy of waiters flung open the door, and with many bows assisted us to alight, saying that Signor Carlo had apprized them we were coming, and that rooms were ready for

the lady and her daughters. By this, I began to comprehend that Signor Carlo must mean my uncle, Mr. Charles D——, whom I was not prepared to hear so unceremoniously designated; but before I had time to speculate further on this peculiarity, the person in question made his appearance, attended by a complete staff of small boys and porters, who at once broke out in furious altercation with those they found already enrolled in our service. My uncle seemed perfectly at his ease amidst this uproar, tucked my arm under his, saw my boxes transferred to the shoulders of three or four sturdy, strong-limbed *facchini*, stamped and raved at some of the most refractory, and then observing we should be late for dinner, and that my cousins were impatient to see me, hurried me up an almost perpendicular ascent—an alley of steps, in fact, strewed with mouldy orange-peel and broken earthenware, which led to a street of scarcely wider dimensions, with lofty dingy houses on each side, that seemed nodding towards each other, and produced an unpleasant sense of suffocation.

My uncle told me, with a smile, that this was quite the West-end of Ancona, where some of the first families resided. The Palazzo, of which he rented a large portion, was amongst the best; and the entrance, a large court with arcades, and a broad stone staircase, carried me back again to visions of Italian splendour. My cousins came running down to receive me, followed by the servants, who all, male as well as female, pressed forward to kiss my hand, and called me *Eccellenza*.

It was all very novel and amusing, and I was quite delighted with the appearance of the house, through the centre of which ran a spacious and lofty hall, upwards of fifty feet long; the walls were painted in fresco by Pellegrino Tibaldi, and the ceiling was richly gilt and emblazoned with the arms of the Farnese family, by one of whom the palace had been built nearly three centuries ago. Opening from this, and in strange contrast with its stately appearance, was a large drawing-room, fitted up in the English style with books, pictures, and other indica-



tions of female occupancy and accomplishments. It was like a fireside scene of home transplanted to this distant land, and as much a marvel to me as the thoroughly English accent, appearance, and manners of the family amongst whom I found myself for the first time.

My cousins had been born abroad, and, nursed by Italian women, waited on by Italian servants, had blossomed into girlhood without ever visiting England, or knowing it but as the land of their pride, their aspirations, their religion, and their love. It was curious to witness, in this out-of-the-way old place, such genuine feeling and enthusiasm; and, stranger still, to understand by what spell so strong a veneration for the unseen fatherland had been infused into their very being, as to prevent their taking root or binding themselves by strong bonds of affection to the country in which their lot seemed cast. And yet they were not kept from intercourse with the natives; on the contrary, I found them here moving in an exclusively Italian circle, looked upon with

sincere respect and esteem by all of whom it was composed, and treated with an unvarying kindness it is pleasant to recall.

On the next and following days, several ladies, acquaintances of the family, came to call upon me, and in the evenings most of the gentlemen came to pay their respects in form to the new-comer; so that, aided by a few hints from my cousins, I was soon quite *au fait* as to the leading tastes and characteristics of my present associates. What struck me most at first, was their excessive ceremoniousness and formality. I never had before seen such courtesies and bows exchanged, or could have deemed it possible that rational beings could endure to hear themselves addressed, or address each other so unceasingly by their titles, as did the *principi*, *marchesi*, and *conti* by whom I was surrounded. Then the observance of certain rules of etiquette was laughable in the extreme—it seemed to be an understood thing that the mistress of the house, on the departure of any lady-visitor, should offer to accompany her to the door. This politeness was to be refused,

then insisted on, still remonstrated against; and so on, till the contested point being reached, the visitor should retreat with a gentle pressure of the hand, and a profound reverence. Amongst the ladies, I perceived I was surveyed with a good deal of interest on account of some fashionable novelties in my wardrobe. One lady took up my dress, and after looking attentively at its texture, asked me what it had cost, and whether I thought she could send for one like it from Florence. I found out afterwards this was meant to be a great compliment to my taste, and that the loan of a new pattern for a dress or mantle was looked upon as an inestimable benefit.

The conversation did not seem very brilliant—and yet, after all, what is ladies' morning-visit prattle at the best? I think it was as good as some it has been my lot to hear in a more brilliant sphere. They talked of the weather, and the opera there would be after Christmas—we were still in October!—and of their children. Yes, let us do them justice there. I do not think

more maternal love and anxiety and tenderness can anywhere be found than in the hearts of Italian women. To say truth, however, this affection so extended itself to the minutest particulars, that I grew rather tired of hearing how such a baby was suffering with his first teeth, or of the apprehensions entertained for another with the measles, or the difficulty of providing a wet-nurse for a third, and his mamma's grief at being debarred from undertaking that office herself, particularly when I found these little incidents to be as much discussed by the gentlemen in their evening-visits, as any other topic; in fact, the accuracy with which they spoke on such matters, and their extended medical details, were sufficiently singular and amusing.

The plan of society seemed thus constituted: during the day, the men lounged at the café, played a game at billiards, or read such newspapers as the severity of the police allowed them at the casino, and generally concluded by strolling a little way beyond the gate I have described on my entrance

into Ancona. The ladies did not, in general, go out every day ; but when they did so, it was to pay visits, or dawdle about the street where the principal shops were to be found. In some families of the *very old régime*, however, or in some of the strict ones of the middle class, it would not have been thought decorous for the female members to be often seen abroad, and an hour's airing at an open window towards the Ave Maria, or dusk, was considered as a substitute for daily out-door exercise. I do not know what an English sanitary commission would have said to this custom, could they but have tested the pestilential atmosphere which the Anconitan belles smilingly inhaled, as, leaning on some old damask drapery, consecrated from time immemorial to this purpose, their glossy hair wreathed in rich plaits around their classically-shaped heads, their dark eyes beaming with excitement, they watched every passer-by, and often from one glance or gesture laid the foundation of more passion and romance than it were fitting in these sober pages to record.

On Sundays and festas there was of course the mass in the morning, which furnished to the women a great opportunity for dress and display, particularly at one of the churches, where the best music was to be heard, and the fashionables usually congregated. But there was nothing comfortable in their way of going to church, if I may use the expression. You never saw husbands and wives, and their children, all walking in pleasantly together. The men would have been laughed at for such a conjugal display; and hence those who went at all, went by themselves; and of these, how many had any serious purpose in their heart, save keeping well in the jealous eyes of the government and priests, or fulfilling some appointment, or whiling away half an hour by listening to the best airs of Ernani or the Lombardi adapted to the organ, I should be unwilling to hazard a conjecture. In the afternoon, the promenade outside the gates was crowded, and four or five very antiquated-looking equipages drove slowly up and down the dusty road, forming what an

old count very complacently designated to us, "Il Corso delle Carrozze."

Our acquaintances could not comprehend our taste for long country-walks, and used to wonder what inducement we could find every day for rambling over the hills and cliffs that rendered the neighbourhood really beautiful.

"Heavens!" said one little contessa, "I should die of the spleen"—this was a very favourite newly-introduced term with them—"if I saw nothing when I went out but the sky, and sea, and trees. What can you find to amuse you? . . . . It is so melancholy! And then that Jews' burying-ground you are so fond of!" . . . .

This was a most singular spot, remote, undefended, spreading over the summit of a cliff that rose abruptly to a great height above the sea; but so grand in its situation, in the desolate sublimity which reigned around, in the reverential murmur of the waves that washed its base, that it was one of our favourite resorts.

It was in vain to explain to her our ad-

miration ; she shook her head, and went on :  
“ That burying-ground—to be amongst so many dead Jews ! ”

“ But we must all die like them,” urged one of my cousins ; “ and it is good for one to be reminded of these things sometimes ”—

“ Pardon me,” interrupted the lady, with a slight shudder ; “ but that is such an English idea ! Oh, that terrible death ! why talk or think about it ? ”

“ How strange this terror is that so many people feel,” rejoined I ; “ it must come upon all of us sooner or later. Nay, if the prognostications of many thinking men in this age are to be relied upon, we are not far from the end of the world.”

The poor lady absolutely turned pale, as she cried out : “ Oh, pray do not talk so—you make me miserable ! Besides,” she said, recovering herself a little, “ I have been told that in the Bible it is expressly said that for seven years before that dreadful day no children are to be born ; and that gives me comfort ; for, at every fresh birth I hear



of, I say to myself—well, the seven years at least have not begun yet!”

So the ladies of Ancona, with not more than one or two exceptions, being all participators in this wholesome dread of retired walks, and the reflections likely to be induced thereby, idled away their time in the manner I have described, with the aid of a little crochet or fancy-work; or, amongst the most studious—they always call reading *study*—the translation of a French novel, until the evening, which brought with it its usual conversazione. Every lady received at her own house some half-dozen gentlemen or so, who were unvarying in waiting upon her, whether she held her levée at her own house, or in her box at the theatre; nay, so unfailing was their attendance, that if indisposition confined her to her bed, you were sure to find them assembled round it, making the *società* as pleasantly, and in as matter-a-fact a way as possible. As they all dined early, the evening commenced betimes, soon after six in winter, and went on till midnight, all dropping in at different

hours, some early, some late, according to the number of their habitual engagements. In general, every one had at least two or three families where he was expected to show himself every evening; and, from a long course of habit, each house had its own hour assigned to it. Many of these intimacies had subsisted for twenty, nay, even thirty years, without any perceptible variation in the usual tenor of intercourse; they always kept up the same ceremony, the same old-fashioned, laborious politeness; assembled in the same half-lighted, comfortless saloon, and sat and talked; lamented the good old times, and grew grey together.

It was an odd, disjointed sort of life for white-headed men to lead, particularly when they had houses and families of their own where they could have passed their evenings, instead of toiling up two or three sets of stairs, and making their bow to two or three sets of people, before they could think of returning to their own roofs to supper and to rest. When I write of Italians and

their dwellings, I avoid using the word *home*, for it would be strangely misapplied. They do not know of the existence of such a blessing as that most beautiful term of ours implies ; neither, to say truth, would they appreciate it in their present imperfect views of domestic life.

It may be asked whether, in these coteries, there was not usually one more distinguished by the lady's preference than the rest ; and in many instances this was no doubt the case, although by no means so invariably as in former generations. Where such a partiality did exist, it was not apparently noticed or commented upon by the others, but accepted as a matter of course—as a proceeding whose harmony it would have been invidious to disturb. The cavalier, in general, paid a visit every day—not, however, to chocolate and the toilet, as old-fashioned novels have it, but about one o'clock, to communicate the fashionable intelligence, offer his opinion on some new dress or piece of millinery, give *bon-bons* to the children, and perhaps accompany the

husband to the stable, to discuss the merits of a new horse or set of harness.

I was told of one old lady who had entered her threescore-years-and-ten, still served with the same homage by her veteran cavalier as she had imperiously exacted some forty winters before. All her contemporaries had died but himself, and he was the last that remained of her *società*, which had no attractions for younger visitors. And so they used to sit in the evening opposite each other, a lamp with a dark shade diffusing an uncertain light upon the time-worn room and faded hangings; both half-blind, deaf, and helpless, nodding drowsily at each other, holding little earthen baskets filled with fire, called *scaldini*, in their trembling hands; yet still, from force of habit, keeping up this semblance of conversation till eleven struck, when the old man's servant came to fetch him, and wrapping him in a large cloak, led him carefully to his own house.

Happily, we did not have regular conversazioni at my uncle's; as he was a widower, and my cousins unmarried, it would not

have been thought correct. We used only to have occasional visitors in the evening, or else invited the good people regularly to tea—which, though never appearing at their own houses, they yet fully appreciated at ours; and played whist, and had a little music, and did our best to amuse them, our exertions being fully repaid by the good humour and sprightliness of our guests.

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## CHAPTER III.

A marriage in high life—Wedding outfit—The first interview—Condition of single women—The laws of courtship—Dependence of young married people—Anecdotes of mothers-in-law.

I DID not tire of my life in Ancona, as my friends in Florence had predicted. There was something so quaint, so unlike anything I had ever before known, in the people among whom I found myself, and they formed such a contrast to the busy, practical sphere in which I had been brought up, that, for the sake of novelty alone, I should have been amused at the change. I hope, however, that some better motive was at work than mere curiosity to interest me. I had always felt a sympathy for the Italians, and resented the indiscriminate abuse with which it is the fashion to assail them; but

until the opportunity for personal observation now afforded, I had not understood how many of their failings may be ascribed to their erroneous system of marriage, their defective method of education, and other domestic evils—evils so deeply rooted, that it will require a complete upheaving of the existing framework of society to destroy their baneful influence.

It was not long before I was enabled to see how matches were made up according to the most orthodox system ; for the marriage of the niece of a lady whom we often saw—our little friend who disliked country walks so much—was being negotiated, and we were daily informed of the progress of affairs. The young lady was not residing in Ancona, but at Macerata, a town about forty miles distant ; and being an orphan, and not largely dowered, her establishment had been a matter of considerable anxiety to her relations, particularly to her grandmother, with whom she lived.

“ Congratulate me,” said the contessa, with a beaming face, one morning : “mamma

writes me she has great hopes of a *partito* for our poor Isotta."

"I am very glad, indeed," said my cousin Lucy, who was always the chief spokeswoman, being the eldest daughter of the house, and of a sedate and prudent turn, which suited her mature age of one-and-twenty—"I am very glad, indeed, to hear this; and what does Isotta say?"

"Oh, she knows nothing about it yet; mamma is making the necessary inquiries, and will then settle everything with the young man's father, old Conte G——, the brother of our cardinal here. Up to the present moment, a mutual friend, who first originated the idea, has been the only channel of communication."

"And if your niece should not chance to like him?" I suggested.

Our little friend lifted up her eyes in astonishment, as she replied, "Not like a person her grandmamma approves! Of course she will be pleased!" and then reverting to the great topic of interest on such occasions, she said, "If, as we hope, all



will be soon arranged, mamma will have a great deal to do in ordering the *corredo*. It is to be a very handsome one, for the *sposo's* family are known to be very particular in such things; and, naturally, we, on our side, do not wish to cut a bad figure."

I asked her some of the details respecting this same *corredo*, or wedding outfit, and she gave me a list of such supplies of linen and every description of wearing apparel, as appeared extravagant in proportion to the young lady's fortune, which was only 12,000 dollars\* (about £2400), an average dowry in this part of Italy. If the sum ascends as high as 20,000 dollars, it is considered large; but in any case the *corredo* has likewise to be provided, at an expense often of 2000 dollars (£400), or even upwards. This outlay, however, is not felt, as a certain sum is always destined for each child from its infancy, and large stores of linen and damask

\* The estimate here given is at the rate of five dollars to the pound sterling, but it varies according to the exchange, which is sometimes 4s. 2d. to the dollar.

table-services are gradually accumulated, in expectation of the great event. The greatest luxury is, perhaps, displayed in petticoats, night-dresses, and such gear, which are of the finest materials, often trimmed with rich lace and embroidered, and are to be counted by sixes of dozens of each kind. In fact, their number is so great, that it is one of the anxieties of an Italian woman's life to look after her hoards of linen, and see that all is kept properly assorted and in good order. Nor is this ambition for a handsome corredo confined to the upper classes, it is shared alike by all ; descending even to the humblest peasant-girl, who is scarcely out of her leading-strings before she thinks of laying by for this long-coveted possession.

But to return to the young lady whose fate was being decided. Two or three days after, her aunt came to announce that all was settled ; that both Isotta and the young count had expressed themselves perfectly satisfied, and their first meeting was to take place the following evening, in presence of

all the members of the two families residing at Macerata.

“Poor girl! What a nervous affair it will be!” I said. “What is the ceremonial to be observed?”

“Why,” said the contessa, quite gravely, “I do not exactly know; mamma does not mention in her letter: it depends on circumstances. Generally the *sposo* merely comes forward, is presented to the young lady, and makes a low bow. Sometimes, if the families previously have been intimately acquainted, he is directed to kiss her hand; and lastly—but this is very rare”—and she lowered her voice—“it is only adopted where there is the oldest friendship or relationship subsisting—the gentleman salutes his bride upon the cheek.”

Amused as I was by this account, I could not help thinking it must be exaggerated, or at least that these courtships, whose programme was as accurately defined as a state ceremony, must be restricted to a few rare instances; but I found this was not the case, and that the contessa had merely stated

what was usual in every family of the nobility of Ancona and the adjacent towns. In many instances, I afterwards learned, the preliminaries for the marriage of a young lady were all settled before she left the walls of a convent where she had been brought up, her wedding taking place within eight days of her return to her parents' house; but this, though esteemed highly desirable, cannot always be arranged, especially where no great recommendations exist, either as to beauty or fortune. As a general rule, girls are kept excessively retired, even in their own families, until some partito has been found; everything being done to foster the impression that their speedy settlement in life is to be the signal for their admission into all the pleasures of society, from which in the meantime they are sedulously excluded. Dressed with scrupulous plainness, seldom or never taken into company, rarely appearing out of doors, except for a drive in a close carriage, or to go to mass, or to call on some old female relation—without the advantages of a cultivated mind or literary

resources—the condition of our Italian unmarried woman is as cheerless and insignificant as it is possible to conceive. Small marvel is it, then, that at the first mention of a suitor, a girl's thoughts should fly to all the fine dresses she will possess, to the becoming *coiffures* she will adopt, and—should her imagination have ever ranged so far—to the liberty of speech and action she will be entitled to enjoy. Not a thought is given to the disposition, tastes, or habits of the person to whom she is soon to be irrevocably united; he is accepted as the condition indispensable to the attainment of all that has been so earnestly desired.

The scene of the first introduction generally takes place with the formality the little contessa described, very rarely going beyond a stately bow and courtesy exchanged between the betrothed. After this interview, the gentleman is every evening expected to pay a visit of an hour or so at the house of his *promessa*, all the members of her family, and the old friends who compose the usual *società*, being present.

He is not placed next to her, nor is he to address himself particularly to her. Should he feel inclined to venture on a remark, she will answer in monosyllables, with downcast eyes, never moving from the sofa on which she sits bolt upright by her mother's side. After a week or so has elapsed, it is an understood thing that he should ask for her portrait, and give her his own in return. At this stage of the proceedings, he is allowed to kiss her hand on presenting the miniature ; and on succeeding evenings he brings her a nosegay, but without any repetition of this privilege ; meanwhile the bride elect is very complacently occupied in knitting him a purse, or embroidering him a smoking-cap, or something of that sort—whatever she is told is customary, in fact—and finally goes to the altar without a thought upon the duties and responsibilities of her new condition.

Even their manner of celebrating a wedding is very different from ours. No bridemaids are ever seen ; for it would not be considered in good taste for any girls to

be present at the religious ceremony ; neither do they take part in the great dinner which closes the day. The newly-married pair do not go into the country, or set out upon a journey, but at once enter into possession of the apartments destined for them in the house of the bridegroom's family.

My uncle used laughingly to quote a remark made to him by a lady in reply to some observation on the contrast thus afforded to an English wedding-tour: "It may be all very well for your nation, who make marriages of sentiment, *caro mio signore*, but I confess that to any of us this prolonged *tête-à-tête* with a husband whom one knows nothing at all of, would be tedious in the extreme." To avoid being thrown upon this terrible companionship, the first week or so of the young *sposa's* married life is fully taken up in receiving the congratulatory visits of her friends and acquaintances ; after which, she and her husband make what is called the first *sortita* together, go to hear mass, call upon every one in due form, and are considered fairly

started in their new position. The dingy Palazzo subsides into its wonted monotony; and the young couple, with no interest or authority in the house, treated like mere children, are expected to conform to the hours and habits of the old people, who, having yielded the same submission in their day, are by no means backward in exacting it themselves.

We knew a family, that of the Marchese G——, one of the most ancient and wealthy in Ancona, where the eldest son, though upwards of thirty-six, and married for more than ten years, was not at liberty to invite any friend of his own to the family-table without his father's permission; neither could he nor his wife, for any convenience of their own, anticipate or retard the fixed hour for dinner, or order that meal to be served in their apartments. All their expenditure was regulated for them, a pair of carriage-horses kept at their disposal, their servants' wages paid; even their subscription to the theatre provided for, and a sum assigned for their dress and pocket-



money—being twenty dollars a month to the heir of this noble house, and to his wife fifteen. This was considered very liberal. All the disposal of the income of the family—very large in reference to the country; it was reported to be nearly 20,000 dollars (£4000) a year—all insight into the accounts and expenditure was exclusively reserved for the old marchese, who would have resented any hint or advice from his son as unwarrantable interference.

Another strange species of coercion that seemed generally kept up in families of this stamp, was in the selection of Christian names for the younger branches. It is not an uncommon thing to hear a young mother lament the uncouth appellations bestowed upon her offspring, and saying, with a shrug of her shoulders, "But what is to be done? It is an old family name, and my *suocera* would have it."

The vexatious tyranny exercised by the mother-in-law, the *suocera*, has almost passed into a proverb, as the source of innumerable evils; yet such is the force of custom amongst

the Italians, that if a son were possessed of independent fortune, and established himself away from the paternal roof, he would be exclaimed against as undutiful in the extreme. I could tell of many sad instances of unhappiness produced by the suocera's influence. In the first place, she is almost invariably ignorant, prejudiced, and bigoted—such being the characteristics of the greater part of Italian women, born and educated some fifty or sixty years ago—and sets her face stubbornly against everything that is not precisely according to her code, whether it relates to politics, the management of her household, or the treatment of her grandchildren. I heard a lady herself recount how she lost five children in succession, owing to their being sent out to be reared by rough peasant-women in the country. They were delicate infants, and could not stand the exposure and want of care to which they were subjected ; and so they died off, one after the other, their poor mother vainly attempting to move the old contessa to allow her to have a wet-nurse in the house.

"In *her* day," persisted the unrelenting woman, "children were brought up in the country; and why should it be otherwise now?" and she had authority enough over her son to compel him to resist his wife's piteous supplications. Often has she said, "My five children were sacrificed to a suocera's power. She yielded at last, and I saved the sixth."

Another lady, whom I saw much of, one of the handsomest women in Ancona, was in such subjection to her mother-in-law, that she dared not sit down in her presence unless invited to do so; and, although the mother of a grown-up son, was as much looked after and interfered with as if she had been still a child. Sometimes her spirit rose, and she attempted to remonstrate, or invoked her husband's assistance, which was invariably the signal for his ordering his horse to be saddled, and going out for a ride—saying, he would have nothing to do with her quarrels with his mother. And this, and worse than this, is the true picture of an Italian Interior, where distrust, variance, and the

weakening of domestic ties are the fruits of the lamentable system I have attempted to describe; which is further perpetuated in the training of the rising generation in the same errors and intolerance.

## CHAPTER IV.

System pursued towards children—Results of Jesuit training—Anecdotes of the Sacré Cœur—A *Contessina* just out of the convent—Difficulty of giving a liberal education to young nobles—No profession open to them but the church—Their ignorance and idleness.

AMONGST those Italians whose minds have risen superior to the disadvantages that surround them, the subject of education is often anxiously discussed. One evening, at my uncle's, we were conversing on this topic with the Conte Enrico A——, a highly intellectual and cultivated young man. He was a native of Ancona, but so far in advance of his townspeople, that he stood almost isolated amongst them. Even as an Englishman, he would have ranked high for mental acquirements, though all perhaps of too dreamy a cast. His was a sort of passive genius, which exhaled itself in poetry and melancholy reflections on the misery of his

country, looking upon any individual exertion as impracticable. This want of energy in striving to carry out the superior workings of their intellect was, until lately, peculiar to most Italians who united reflection and high principle with patriotism and talent. For Central and Northern Italy, however, this remark no longer holds good. The moving spirits of the revolutions in Tuscany, the Duchies, and Romagna, have been precisely the most cultivated and moderate amongst the upper and middle classes ; but the course recent events have taken in the Marche, confirms the opinion that the political leaders there are still men of thought rather than of action.

On the evening in question, I remember he told us we were not half thankful enough, nor proud enough, of the privilege of being Englishwomen, nor sensible of the blessings which from our very cradles that name conferred.

“As soon as English children can distinguish one letter from another,” he said, “books are put into their hands which inculcate

truth, honour, courage; and thus is laid the basis of that education which has made your nation what it is—the envy and wonder of Europe.”

“That reminds me of a plan we have often talked of,” said Lucy D——: “it is that of translating some of our nice children’s story-books, and getting them circulated through these States.”

“Ah! you forget,” he replied, shaking his head, “that before teaching the children, you must educate the mothers of Italy; or else your efforts will be paralysed by the ignorance and folly that would be arrayed against you.”

“Besides, you forget,” said my uncle, looking up from his paper, “that the mothers of Italy have very little to do with the education of their children: your convents and seminaries relieve them of that task.”

“Too true,” said the count. “As our fathers and grandfathers did before us, so also must we: and that is why, at seven or eight years old, our boys are sent to Jesuit colleges; while our girls, at even an earlier age, are

placed in nunneries, to learn from women perpetually secluded in the cloister, the duties that are to fit them for wives and mothers in the world."

"Never even coming home for their holidays," remarked my uncle. "Strange that there should be people in existence who can consent to this unnecessary separation from their children for ten or eleven years. How the character may be worked upon, and all its fresh impulses destroyed, by this long period of unbroken influence!"

"But do they, then, never see their children?" I inquired.

"Oh yes, they may go and visit them," he replied; "but an interview of but an hour or so occasionally, is a very poor substitute for more unrestrained intercourse; besides, it often happens that the convent or college is at a considerable distance, and it does not suit people to be always travelling."

"Talking of these visits," said the count, "reminds me of one I lately paid to Loretto, to see the eldest son of the Principe L——, a handsome, animated, and promising little



fellow of nine years old, who had been placed at the Jesuits' College there about six months before. I could scarcely recognize the child. Without ill-usage, without any compulsory discipline, but simply by the steady workings of their wonderful method of compression, the boy's spirit and originality appeared to be as completely extinguished as if they had never existed. He had become grave, thoughtful beyond his age, with a little demure, bland look, that seemed a reflection of the countenances of his priestly instructors. I horrified the ecclesiastic who was present during the interview, by rather maliciously asking the child if he still continued to take as much interest as ever in all scientific and mechanical pursuits, and in reading of the recent discoveries. As the sworn upholder of a government that opposes railways, and laments the invention of printing, the priest was bound to express his surprise at the suggestion. 'My child,' said he, mildly addressing his pupil, 'is it possible you ever thought thus? You have other tastes now. Tell the signor

conte what you most wish to become.' The boy coloured, cast down his eyes, and murmured, 'Un Latinista'—a Latin scholar. Anything like a love of aught relating to progression was a crime."

There was some bitterness, but no exaggeration, in what the young Anconitan related. The question of the Jesuits is purely a political one, they being supported by the party termed by the liberals *Oscurantisti* or *Codini*—the first name signifying literally obscurers, and the last derived from the queue worn by the gentlemen of the last century, and without which, to this day, upon the Italian stage, the portrait of a prejudiced obstinate old noble is incomplete. Families of these views esteem it, therefore, a point of conscience to intrust the education of their children to this order.

The Jesuit colleges nearest Ancona are at Loretto, a distance of twenty miles; and at Fano, about thirty miles off, in an opposite direction. At the former place also, the French *Dames du Sacré Cœur* have a

convent for young ladies, embracing much the same line of principles. It cannot be denied that, as respects general accomplishments and ladylike deportment, their pupils infinitely surpass those of all other conventual establishments in the country; but the Jesuit leaven that pervades the whole course of tuition, deters all parents, not devoted to the tenets of Loyola, from placing their daughters under their care.

The House at Loretto was admirably conducted; simplicity, cleanliness, refinement, order, were its striking features. The pupils appeared to me perfectly happy. Most of them had entered at six or seven years of age, and cherished an enthusiastic affection for the nuns, or *Ladies*, as they are generally styled, who by their gentle and dignified deportment, their patient study of character, and the devotion of their whole faculties to the task, acquired over them an unlimited ascendancy. A girl in the Sacré Cœur never learned to reason;—what “*La Mère Supérieure*” once said, was to her an article of faith,—infallible, unimpeachable.

The opinions thus formed—and they designedly embraced every relation of society—were seldom or never shaken off.

In politics, as may be conceived, the Sacré Cœur is unmitigatedly Austrian. In 1848, while all Italy was applauding the prowess or lamenting the misfortunes of Charles Albert, the pupils at Loretto knew of no hero but Radetsky; and celebrated his triumph over Italian independence by a grand march for the pianoforte, composed expressly for them by their music-master, *maestro di cappella* to the Church of the Santa Casa.

The acquaintance possessed by these ladies with all that is passing in the outer world, down to the minutest details of inner life, is a well-known attribute of the order. Imparted to their Jesuit confessors, this knowledge has often become a powerful political engine. The means by which it is acquired is through the confidence and affection of their pupils. I once happened to be staying in the same house with a young lady who had recently left the convent.

The Contessina used to write every day to the *Mère Supérieure* long crossed letters, in a delicate French hand. "You carry on an active correspondence," some one remarked. "Oh, yes!" was the unsuspecting reply; "the *Mère* is so good! She tells us always to remember, when we leave her care, that whatever is of interest to us interests her; and to tell her of our occupations, our acquaintances; of those who come to the house, and what they speak about."

I had also an opportunity of observing the mastery the Sacred Heart obtains over family ties and instincts. Another young girl of our acquaintance—indeed, she was one of our most intimate friends—was on the eve of entering the novitiate, when she heard that the cholera was raging at Trieste. The alarm was great in Ancona, where a belief in contagion prevailed; and it was generally anticipated that, through the constant communication going on between the Austrian garrison and that port, the epidemic would be speedily transmitted. The parents of the future novice were somewhat

advanced in years, delicate in health, and apprehensive of the impending danger. She therefore wrote to the Superior, proposing to adjourn her entrance into the order till after the cholera had visited Ancona, in order to be at hand to nurse her parents if attacked. "My child," was the reply, "leave your parents to higher care. This is clearly a temptation of the Evil One." And accordingly she went.

Notwithstanding the favour it enjoys with the Government, some members of the *vieille roche* are hostile to the Sacré Cœur; not, as it may be supposed, on account of its political bias, but because its teaching—which comprehends a thorough knowledge of French and music, with some insight into the other usual elements of female education—is unnecessarily erudite. A strong party still exists in favour of the old-fashioned nunneries; of the system pursued in which the following is no exaggerated report:—

One day a pretty, bashful-looking *contessina*, just emancipated from her convent,

came with her mother to pay a morning visit. While the latter was engaged with poor Lucy, on whom doing the honours to the elderly ladies always devolved, I endeavoured to overcome the daughter's timidity, and draw her into conversation. Not knowing what else to speak of, I began about her recent studies, and inquired if she knew French.

"No, signora,"\* with downcast eyes, "they did not teach that in the convent."

"Did you learn history or geography?"

"No, signora."

"But you can embroider?"

"Si, signora—the nuns taught us that, and we worked a beautiful set of vestments for the priest who said Mass in our church."

"And what did you learn besides?"

"To read and write, and the Catechism."

\* "*Signorina*" is not invariably used in Central and Southern Italy in addressing a young lady, though she is always spoken of as such. The Christian name, with the prefix of *Signora*, is often applied in conversation.

“And have you read many pretty books?”

“No, signora; only the ‘Lives of the Saints.’”

“Where was this convent?—was it near Loreto, or Jesi, or Macerata?”

“I do not know, signora.”

“You do not know!—was it very far off, then?”

“Not very, signora; it took four hours to go there from Ancona in a carriage. I remained ten years; I never went out all the time, and I returned home the same way that I went.”

During this dialogue her voice never changed in its monotonous intonation, with the unvarying “signora” at every sentence, which Italian convent girls are so remarkable for bestowing; when my uncle walked into the drawing-room with a young Oxonian, the son of a very old friend, who had unexpectedly arrived to take the steamer for Greece on an eastern tour.

We jumped up in delight, and shook hands so heartily, that I fear the *Contessa*



was quite scandalized ; but for a few minutes we were too much taken up with our countryman to think of her. When calmness was restored, and she rose to take leave, I perceived, to my great amusement, that although the daughter's eyelids were drooping as before, she was busy, beneath their long lashes, in taking a survey of the handsome young stranger, although not the movement of a muscle in the smooth expressionless face was perceptible ; neither did she evince any apparent consciousness of all that was going on, as, meekly following her mother, she curtseyed herself out of the room.

It is certainly extraordinary how, after this penitential discipline, the instant they are married, these demure little damsels acquire the full use of their visual organs, and bring all their latent fire into play. Indeed, the sudden transition from an awkward, silent, ill-dressed girl, such as I have described, into an elegant, self-possessed, talkative woman, is so wonderful as only to be credited by those who daily witness the

metamorphosis effected in Italy by the dignity and enfranchisement of matrimony.

Persons desirous of a more extended scale of instruction for their daughters, and who are, at the same time, hostile to the *Sacré Cœur*, find themselves in great perplexity. The experiment has been tried by one or two families of sending them into Tuscany, where there are several institutions for female education, conducted on comparatively liberal principles; but the distance, the danger and expense of the journey, were all such serious drawbacks, that the example found few imitators. The manners of the country, and, it must be added, the incapacity of the mothers for the task, render it inexpedient to bring up girls at home; so that, after much talking and deliberation, nine fathers out of ten resign themselves to do as their fathers did before them, and deposit their daughters in the old convents, out of harm's way, for half a score of years at least.

It must be confessed, they have enough to occupy them as to the means of educat-

ing their sons, when they have the bad taste not to confide them to the Jesuits. Sometimes they send them to Pisa or Sienna in Tuscany, at which last there used to be a college of some eminence, conducted on moderate principles by the *Padri Scolopj*; but of late years abuses have crept in, and it has greatly degenerated. Others, again, engage an abbé or tutor, for the first few years, and then place them to complete their studies at the once celebrated university of Bologna.

But this institution, like everything else in the Roman States, has fallen into such decay, and its professors are under such restrictions, that at the conclusion of his academical career, unless a youth has more than average abilities, particularly if he belongs to the higher classes, the general range of his attainments may be rated as beneath mediocrity. Debarred by the prejudices of caste from entering any profession but that of the church, conscious that he will never have a field on which to display his abilities, without stimulus to exer-

tion or prospects for the future, the young noble seems to resign himself to the conviction that his safest course is to vegetate unthinking, unquestioning, unknowing, and unknown.

Even the desire for distinction in arms, or the excitement of merely holiday soldiering, parades, reviews, and a gay garrison life, so common to most young men, cannot stir the dull waters of his patrician existence; for there is no military career open to the pontifical subjects, with the exception of the *Guardia Nobile* at Rome, which is limited to a small number of the sons of the old nobility. The few miserable regiments which compose the Pope's army are so low in the scale of social estimation, that to say a man is only fit to become a Papalino soldier is almost the grossest insult that can be passed upon him.

The ranks, wholly composed of volunteers, there being no conscription, are recruited from the dregs of the population, spies, quondam thieves, and so forth. As for the officers, I know not whence they are

procured, never having been acquainted with a family owing to the discredit of relationship with an individual thus engaged, although one or two, who had scapegraces of sons, whose existence it was desirable to ignore, were supposed to have sent them, by way of punishment, into the service.

The ignorance of some of these young nobles on most subjects of general information was perfectly startling. Many of them were quite unacquainted with the nature of temets which had rent Europe asunder, with the geographical position of neighbouring countries, or with the best-known historical facts. Not having access to any easy literature, such as our magazines and miscellanies afford, owing to the extraordinary limitations imposed upon the press, they had been left without an inducement to read, or an opportunity of discovering their own deficiency.

One or two anecdotes, the first of which I heard my cousins relate, will prove there is no exaggeration in these remarks.

During the wild excitement of the early part of 1849, a youthful count, glowing with new-born patriotism, confided to them one day that he and all the *Giocenti*—that is, Young Ancona—had determined upon turning Protestant, in order to get rid of the *preti*, and to conciliate England. Presently a shade of embarrassment came over his face, and he said, “Pardon me, but now I think of it, tell me, do the Protestants believe in God?”

On one occasion, I was present when some conversation took place before a youth fresh from Bologna, in which an allusion was made to Cleopatra and the asp. “How can I know anything about these matters?” he exclaimed; “I have never read the Bible!” Another time, I remember hearing my uncle gravely asked, in reference to a journey he was meditating, whether he meant to go by sea from Marseilles to Paris?

It was melancholy in the extreme to see the number of young men thus idling away their lives, filling the caffès and casino, and

subsisting on a stipend that an English younger son would consider inadequate to purchase gloves for a London season. The plan pursued is, to give each son an apartment in the family residence, his dinner, and the allowance of from ten to twelve dollars a month, which is to provide for his dress, his breakfast, the theatre, and cigars.

How they contrived, with these limited means, to keep up the appearance they did is perfectly inexplicable. They even seemed able to gratify little harmless flights of fancy, such as coming out unexpectedly in singular suits of Brobdignagian checks or startling green cut-aways, which, with a pair of luxuriant whiskers, a hasty, determined walk, and a peculiar flourish of the stick, were supposed to constitute the faithful portraiture of an Englishman, than to resemble whom there could be no greater privilege, so great was the Anglomania that prevailed.

And now, I fancy, I hear the remark, "All this time you have been describing the manners of the Italian nobility. What

are their gentry like—their middle classes?”  
Which inquiries shall be answered, as fully  
as circumstances admit, in my next chapter.



## CHAPTER V.

The middle classes—Superior education of the men—Low standard of female intellect and manners—Total separation from the nobility—Cultivated physician—A peep into his household—Family economy—*Conversazione* at the chemist's—Passion for gambling—The *caffè*.

It is very difficult to convey any correct idea as to the state of the middle ranks of society in Italy, particularly if we do not divest ourselves of everything like comparison between them and what apparently are the corresponding classes in England.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that no gentry exist among the Italians. If a man springs from the nobility, he has no resource in the Pope's States but the Church: any other profession is deemed incompatible with the dignity of his birth, as there is neither army nor

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navy, nor any other public service. If he belongs to the *mezzo cetto*, as it is termed, he must either be a physician, a merchant, a lawyer, a shopkeeper, or hold some meagre appointment, as an underling, in one of the government offices, the posts of distinction and emolument in these departments being almost invariably conferred upon ecclesiastics. It is rare to find this middle class, the best educated beyond a doubt, contributing to swell the ranks of the priesthood, which are principally recruited from the families of the decayed nobility, or from the peasantry and lower orders.

In years gone by, the *mezzo cetto* bowed unquestioningly to the supremacy of the nobles, who patronized them affably in return, invited the family lawyer and physician to dinner on the saint's-day of the head of the house, or for the christening of the junior branches. They stood pretty much in the light of client and patron, as in the days of their Roman ancestors; but of late everything has changed, and between the two orders there is now little good-will

or assimilation. It used formerly to be a constant object of ambition to rise to the privileged rank; and when any one succeeded in amassing a fortune, part of it was often laid out in the purchase of some estate that conferred a title of nobility on its possessor; then gradually, through intermarriages with old but impoverished houses, the *ci-devant roturier* fairly established himself in his new position, and after one or two generations, the origin of the family was forgotten. Now, on the contrary, a disposition to ridicule what formerly was so much coveted seems to prevail, and men have discovered that there are other roads to distinction than through a patent of nobility; but, mingled with this spirit of independence, there may still be discerned a jealous feeling at the superior ease and polish of the nobles—a sort of innate refinement, which all their ignorance and prejudices cannot efface.

In the middle class, the absence of gentle breeding and of the amenities of society is mainly attributable to the inferior

position held by the women belonging to it, or rather the low standard at which they are rated. The very tone in which an Italian of this grade passingly alludes to *le donne di casa* is sufficiently indicative of the universally prevalent feeling of their incapacity and helplessness. Scarcely any attempt is made at improvement; and the results can easily be imagined. Nothing can be found more vulgar and illiterate than the wives and connections of some of the most scientific men in the country, or more homely and inelegant than their domestic arrangements; nothing to our English ideas more repelling than the appearance of a professor's lady slipshod, screaming at her maid-of-all-work, or gossiping with the wife of a doctor-of-law from an opposite window.

In compliment to our English name and culture, our right to the best society the place afforded was unhesitatingly acknowledged; and it is for this reason I can say but little comparatively about the habits and interior of the mezzo cetto. Perhaps

this of itself conveys a better idea of the complete separation that exists, than anything else I could bring forward. With two or three exceptions, no untitled person appeared in the circles in which we moved; and with these two or three I observed no allusion was ever made to their wives and families; their very existence seemed to be ignored. Among all our acquaintances, one of those we took the greatest pleasure in seeing was a physician, certainly a man of no ordinary attainments: gifted in intellect and conversational powers, he would have been an acquisition to any society; but except in his professional capacity, it was very difficult to induce him to accept any offers of attention. We used to be glad of some trifling ailment as a pretext for sending for him—an indulgence which the low price of his visits—three pauls, about fifteen pence—rendered very excusable; and we then would have long conversations on politics, poetry, and English customs and inventions. Like all Italians of a superior stamp, he took the most lively

interest in our country's greatness and advancement, mingled with a constant fear of his credulity being imposed upon, that rendered him very amusing.

One day, after talking about railways, and lamenting the obstinacy of the Government in opposing their introduction into the Pontifical States, he said, hesitatingly, "I have to-day heard something about England that surpasses all belief. A person just arrived from London has been trying to persuade me that he has seen a railway there which runs over houses. Now, can this be true?"

"Oh, he must mean the railway to Black-wall!" exclaimed one of my cousins, who, although she had never been in England, with that marvellous interest in all connected with it I have described, joined to the diligent study of the "Illustrated London News," and some of our most useful periodicals, was perfectly versed in every recent improvement. He listened to her animated description with an earnestness it is not easy to conceive, and at the conclu-

sion said, with the florid diction peculiar to the south, "Glorious country, capable of such achievements! Happy country, to have such daughters to recount them!"

It must have been disheartening to a man of this character to return, after his day's labours were ended, to a home such as his was described to us: small, dark, scantily furnished—the little drawing-room, according to the manners of that class, unoccupied even in the evening, and exhibiting no traces of books or needle-work—his wife utterly uncompanionable and uncultivated, issuing from the kitchen in a slatternly *déshabille*, to greet him with some shrill complaint against the children, who, pale, whimpering, and unwholesome, looked as if they were pining for fresh air and exercise. Such is the appearance of the household for six days of the week. On Sundays, the lady comes out richly dressed, with a dignified deportment that a duchess might envy, and slowly paces the promenade, accompanied by her children, elaborately attired, and the maid-servant, whose

exterior has undergone the same magical transformation.

The manner in which Italians of this rank contrive to gratify their taste for dress would seem perfectly marvellous, considering their slender resources, if one had not some insight into the remarkable frugality of their household expenditure. No English economist could contrive to keep body and soul together in the way they do: our northern constitutions would sink from insufficiency of aliment if compelled to follow their regimen.

Let us take a peep at another family by way of illustration. It consists of father, mother, two children, and a maid-servant; and the income on which they depend for their maintenance may be estimated at from fifty to sixty pounds a year. The husband holds some responsible Government appointment in the Customs, or Provincial Treasury, or something of the kind. Before he gets up in the morning, he drinks a cup of *café noir*, or, if his circumstances permit, he partakes of it at the *caffè*, with the addition, perhaps, of a cake



of the value of a half-penny: the same beverage, with milk and a little bread, forms the breakfast of the family at home. One o'clock is the general hour for dinner. There is soup, containing either slices of toasted bread, or rice, or vermicelli; then the *lessò*, the meat from which the broth has been made, never exceeding two pounds—of twelve ounces—in weight, half a pound being usually calculated as the allowance for a grown-up person; this is eaten with bread, which holds the place of potatoes in England, and is consumed in large quantities. A dish of vegetables, done up with lard or oil, completes the repast; but I must not omit that the poorest table is well furnished with excellent native wine, which, as well as the oil, is generally the production of some little piece of land in the country that the family possess. This routine of living is never departed from, except on *maigre-days*—when fish, either fresh or salted, Indian corn-meal, with a little tomata and cheese, dried haricot beans, lentils, and so forth, take the place of the usual fare—and Sundays and

Festas, which are solemnized by an additional dish—such as a roasted pigeon or a few cutlets. In the evening they sup; but it is scarcely to be called a meal—consisting merely of a little salad, fennel-root eaten raw, or fruit, with those never-failing accompaniments of bread and the sparkling ruby wine, that really seem their principal support.

The head of the house does not trouble his family much with his presence; he spends his evenings abroad, either making *conversazione* at some neighbour's, or at the caffè; or if his means be so restricted as to deny him the occasional indulgence of a cigar or a glass of *eau sucrée*, which he might be led into there, he has the resource of going into the apothecary's shop, where, amidst a stifling atmosphere of drugs and nauseous compounds, a number of people congregate to lounge and gossip. The doctors resort here, and a choice circle of their intimate friends besides, and all the news—foreign, medical, and domestic—is fully discussed.

There are, of course, many amongst the mezzo cetto whose incomes are much beyond the instance I have just stated; some are in positive affluence, but their style of housekeeping does not vary in proportion; and the account here given may be taken as a very faithful specimen of the condition of the majority of this class, in which the elements of several gradations of rank in England are curiously blended.

The domestic manners here attempted to be traced are, it will be at once perceived, widely different from what are comprehended by us in the term "middle classes;" strangely opposed to all we are accustomed to include under that designation. Those evening *conversazioni* at the apothecary's, for instance; not mere students lounging about on the look-out for practice, but white-headed men, ranking high in their profession, lawyers, merchants, shopkeepers, all cronies and gossips of half a century's standing—what analogy is there in our own country to anything of this sort?

A physician of repute, in one of our large towns, would stare at finding himself in the centre of a group assembled in the dingy *Farmacia*; still greater would be his surprise could he understand the nature of the conversation so eagerly carried on. Contrary to English medical etiquette in matters which belong to their profession, these Esculapians are especially diffuse, each relating, for the benefit of the circle, the minutest particulars of any interesting case he has in hand, without the slightest reserve in mentioning the patient, who becomes public property, to be dissected and lectured upon at pleasure. Besides which laudable relaxation, a pastime of another kind is often carried on in some little den at the back of the shop, where a card-table is spread, and large sums, in reference to the means of the players, are nightly staked.

The passion for gambling is very general, extending to all ranks, and, not confined to cards, exhibits itself in a fondness for everything connected with hazard—such as raffles and lotteries, about which last

I shall speak more in detail in another chapter.

Scarcely a day used to pass in which people did not come to the door to ask us to take tickets in some *riffa*; it was either a poor woman who wanted to dispose of her pearl ear-rings; or a girl *che si voleva far sposa*, and by way of earning a few pauls to buy a wedding dress, offered a pin-cushion for a prize. Fishermen made raffles of their finest turbot; ladies (though rather *sub rosa*) of their old-fashioned shawls; distressed dandies of elaborate pipes; in fact, never was there a population in which the fickle goddess numbered more persevering votaries.

In the *caffè*, play was always going on, I believe, in a greater or less degree. These establishments, so indispensable to an Italian's existence, must not be identified with the fairy-like structures of mirrors, chandeliers, and arcades, that Paris and some of the principal cities of Italy exhibit. In all the inferior towns which I have visited, one description of a *caffè* may

serve to convey a very correct idea of the totality. A middle-sized room, opening on the street—in summer with an awning, benches, and little round tables outside the door; within, similar benches and round tables, a very dirty brick floor, and a dark region at the back, from whence ices, lemonade, *eau sucrée*, coffee, chocolate, fruit syrups, and occasionally punch—denominated *un punch*, and cautiously partaken of—are served out. Youths with cadaverous faces and mustachios, in white jackets striped with blue, answering to the appellation of *bottega*, fly about like ministering genii, and from four or five o'clock in the morning till past twelve at night, know repose only as a name.

The caffè likewise comprehends the office of confectioner and pastrycook, and no cakes or sweetmeats can be procured but what it furnishes; sorry compositions, it must be owned, their predominant flavour being that of tobacco, with which, from being kept on a counter in the general room, amid a thick cloud of smoke from a dozen or so of

detestable cigars, they are naturally impregnated. They are inexpensive delicacies, however; for the value of a half-penny such gigantic puffs of pastry and preserve, such blocks of sponge-cake garnished with deleterious ornaments, such massive compounds of almond and white of egg are obtainable, as would make a schoolboy's eyes glisten with delight. Sold at half-price the next day—a farthing, be it remembered—they are purchased by poor people for their children's slight matutinal refection. We could never persuade one of my uncle's servants, the father of a family, that a piece of bread would have been a far more wholesome breakfast for children of five or six years old, than a little weak coffee, and one of these stale cakes. He would shake his head, and say it was more *civile*, *i. e.* refined, for the *povere creature* than bread; as for brown bread—*soldiers' bread*, as they contemptuously term it—being reduced to that, is considered the extremity of degradation.

The sweetmeats the caffè fabricates are

still more primitive than its cakes, principally consisting of unbleached almonds, coarsely encased in flour and sugar, chocolate in various forms, and candied citron. Immense quantities of these are prepared at Christmas, partly disposed of to outdoor customers, and the remainder, piled up on large trays, are raffled for among the frequenters of the place, with a zest which shows that, however insignificant be the prize, or paltry the venture, the delight in all games of chance is still predominant.

Besides the caffè, properly so called, with its talkers and loungers and smokers, its players at dominoes and cards, its readers of the few newspapers permitted—so meagre of details, so garbled in their statements, that little information can be gathered from their columns—the premises generally contain a *sala del bigliardo* upstairs, and sometimes a private room for the accommodation of such systematic card-players as nightly resort there, and do not wish the magnitude of their stakes to attract public attention. Members of the oldest nobility, and



the most questionable mezzo cetto, princes and brokers, merchants and *marchesi*, Jews and Christians, are known to pass every evening of their lives together in this manner ; and, nevertheless, hold no intercourse at other times, never entering each other's houses, or acknowledging or seeking any further acquaintance beyond the mysterious precincts of the caffè.

## CHAPTER VI.

Prejudice against fires — General dilapidation of dwelling-houses—A lady's *valet de chambre*—Kindness towards servants—Freedom of intercourse with their masters—Devotedness of Italians to the sick—Horror of death—Funerals—Mourning.

WHILE thus curious about the middle ranks, it must not be forgotten that in the upper there was quite sufficient difference from all one's preconceived ideas of elegance or comfort to render their domestic habits interesting. One of the strangest things that struck me as the winter came on, was the prejudice prevailing against the use of fire-places, or, indeed, against any appliances to mitigate the severity of the weather. Horace Walpole, in his letters, says, very justly, that the Italians never yet seem to have found out how cold their climate is; and this remark, made a hundred years ago, is still

perfectly applicable—at least as regards the people of Ancona.

The dread of sitting near a fire, and the contempt for carpets expressed by the old inhabitants, are perfectly ludicrous: they mourn over the effeminacy of the rising generation, who, so far as they are permitted, gladly avail themselves of these pernicious indulgences. A gentleman one night came freezing into our drawing-room, and as he stood complacently before the fire, made us laugh at the account of a visit he had just been paying to the Count M——, the admiral of the port—a sinecure office, it is needless to remark. He found him in bed with a slight attack of gout, and his wife and daughter-in-law, with several visitors, were sitting round him, making *la società*: the gentlemen in their hats and cloaks, and the ladies in shawls, handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and the never-absent *scaldino*, filled with live embers, in their hands. Our friend was pressed by the admiral to follow the general example, and cloak and cover himself. He declined at

first, being of a very ceremonious disposition; but soon, he admitted, his scruples gave way before the excessive coldness of the room, on a northern aspect, destitute of fire or carpet; and he resumed his out-door apparel like the rest.

It used often to happen, when paying a morning visit, that the drawing-room fire was ordered to be lighted out of compliment to us, in spite of our entreaties to the contrary; the result, as we too well anticipated, after many laborious efforts on the part of the unhappy servitor, with a vast expenditure of breath—a method of ignition seemingly preferred to bellows—being invariably a hopeless abandonment of the enterprise, a stifling amount of smoke, and an unlimited number of apologies.

In the daytime, the Anconitan ladies, even of the first rank, rarely occupy their drawing-rooms, which are merely entered to receive visitors; they mostly sit in their bed-chambers until evening; and hence the formal appearance, the absence of all comfort, that strikes an English eye so much

on first entering their houses. From the street you proceed, by a large *porte cochère*, of which the gates are closed at night, into a court or vaulted passage, wide enough to admit a carriage. Of this, evidence is afforded by the appearance of that vehicle in dim perspective; while undoubted proofs arise, through the olfactory nerves, of the immediate vicinity of the stables. You ascend a handsome stone staircase, but rarely swept, and only traditionally white-washed, on which groups of beggars are stationed in various attitudes, and pause at the first floor, before a door that has not been painted for thirty years, when the present owner of the palace was married. Your first summons is unheeded; and it is not till after ringing a second time rather impatiently, you are admitted by a dirty man-servant, who has evidently been cleaning lamps, and is uneasily settling himself into his tarnished livery-coat, which had been hanging on a clothes-horse in a corner of the hall, in strange contrast with a large genealogical tree in a massive gilt frame,

and four carved benches painted with armorial bearings, but literally begrimed with dirt, forming its principal furniture. You next traverse a magnificent apartment—the hall of state in olden times—about fifty feet long and forty wide, still retaining traces of its former splendour. The lofty ceiling is richly painted in those fanciful arabesques which belong to a period between the school of Raphael and the decadence of art at the end of the seventeenth century. The walls are hung with family portraits of various epochs—knights in armour, children in starched ruffs and brocades, cardinals in their scarlet robes; and alternated with these are immense mirrors, dimly reflecting on their darkened surface the changes that have crept over the once gorgeous scene. The rich gilding above and around you, of the frames and candelabra, of the splendid cornices that surmount the inlaid doors, and of the ponderous chairs in their immovable array—all this does not more forcibly bear witness to the lavish profusion that must once have presided here, than do the

torn and faded draperies, the broken and uneven pavement, the unwashed and uncurtained windows, to the present neglect and penury which make no effort to ward off the progress of decay.

Beyond this is the drawing-room, fitted up according to the fashion of thirty years ago, since which nothing has been added to its decorations. The walls are covered with crimson brocaded satin, as well as the two upright forbidding-looking sofas and the chairs which are stationed around; there is a carpet, but it is very thin and discoloured. Between the windows there is a marble *console*, on which is placed a time-piece; and on the opposite side of the room stands a corresponding one, embellished by a tea-service of very fine old china, and a silver *lucerna*, one of those classic-shaped lamps that have been used in Italy since the days of the Etruscans; there is no table in the centre, or before the sofa, no arm-chairs, and no books. Wood is laid in the fireplace ready for us; it has thus remained since our last

visit, and we entreat that it may stay unmolested.

The *marchesa* comes in to see us ; she has a tall figure, but rather bent, and though little more than fifty, looks in reality much older. She takes snuff, and carries a checked cotton pocket-handkerchief : she kisses us on both cheeks, and calls us her dear children. There is some difficulty about adjusting our seats, because she wishes to give up the sofa to my cousin Lucy and me, at which we of course remonstrate ; and the difficulty is not removed until we propose a compromise, and sit upon it one on each side of her. The servant places footstools before us, and brings his lady her scaldino. She is an invalid, and we talk at first about her health ; but though naturally not averse to such a topic, she has not the keen relish for medical disquisitions which Thackeray declares is the peculiar attribute of the British female ; this perhaps is owing to her ideas of the healing art being very much circumscribed—not extending beyond ptisans and sudorifics, the Italian panacea



for all the ills of life. Next we discourse about the Opera, the carnival season from Christmas to Lent having just commenced; and the marchesa inquires if we often go there, and how we like the prima donna: she says that her *nuora* (daughter-in-law) is passionately fond of everything connected with the theatre, but hints that she might oftener renounce the indulgence of that taste, and stay at home to make the *partita* at cards with her. Being, however, as she herself remarks, a very amiable specimen of the genus *suocera*, she does not attempt in this respect to coerce the *marchesina's* inclinations, remaining satisfied with the privilege of occasionally grumbling, and claiming sympathy for her forbearance. Then we are told of the progress of a law-suit which has been pending more than twenty years between her brother and herself, and can never be concluded, because the Legislature admits of appeals from one tribunal to another, against the judgment last pronounced; so that these affairs are generally prolonged while the litigating

parties have life or funds at their disposal. Disputes of this kind between near relations are of such common occurrence as to excite no surprise or animadversion. Of course, we sympathize with her anxiety as to its termination; and then a turn is given to the conversation by the entrance of one of her married daughters, residing in the same street, who now comes in to pay her mother her accustomed daily visit, and kisses her hand with a mixture of deference and affection that is novel, but not unpleasing.

After the usual inquiries concerning the children and her son-in-law, the old lady turns again to us, and, for the fiftieth time, reverts to a project she has much at heart—that of arranging a *matrimonio* for one of my cousins; and again, for the fiftieth time, she is gravely reminded that an insuperable barrier exists to anything of the kind. Any allusion to controversial subjects being, by long-established consent, interdicted between my uncle's family and their Anconitan acquaintances, the marchesa is fain to content herself with a sigh and expressive

shrug of the shoulders; and tapping me on the cheek, inquires if I, too, have such an objection to change my religion and *far mi Cattolica* as my poor cousins are imbued with. "Ah, *carina*," said she, confidentially, "I could get good matches for you all, if you had not these unhappy scruples!"

However, I laughingly assure her I am as obdurate as the rest, and we rise to take our leave. The same process of kissing is gone through as when we came in, and we are asked anxiously whether our *cameriera* is in waiting, as it invariably shocks her rigid ideas of propriety that we should cross the street unattended. On being answered in the negative, the marchesa insists on summoning a grey-headed old man, dressed in rusty black, denominated her *valet de chambre*, and confiding us to his care to see us safely to our home, she especially charges him not to leave us till the door is opened, as if some danger lurked upon the very confines of our threshold.

This is only one among the many instances of the extraordinary restraint exer-

cised in Italy upon the freedom of unmarried women. A girl of fifteen, if married, is at liberty to walk about alone, while I have known a woman of forty—the only Italian old maid, by the bye, it has been my lot to meet—who was not allowed to move a step without at least one trusty servant as her body-guard.

Our remonstrances and entreaties are unheeded, and we depart with our veteran escort: the marchesa is so pleased that she kisses us again, and notwithstanding her infirmities, insists on tottering across the great hall and accompanying us nearly to the door; while the dirty man-servant, after showing us out, with an anxious, perturbed expression, returns to his mistress, to replenish her *scaldino*, give her any fragment of news he has collected, and comment upon our extraordinary English infatuation.

The old man, who feebly hobbled after us in the steep, unevenly-paved street we had to traverse, was an excellent specimen of that race of servants such as we read of in Molière and Goldoni, but are now rarely

seen in real life. He had lived upwards of forty years in the family, was identified with its cares and interests, and gradually, from being the personal attendant of the old *marchese*, had after his death assumed the same office towards his widow, who, as an invalid, required constant care. Hence his title of the marchesa's valet de chambre, which, strange to say, was a literal one, as he assisted her maid in her toilet, sat up at night in her room when her frequent illnesses required it, brought her her coffee every morning before she got up, and was servant, nurse, confidential adviser, as the occasion needed.

Another old man in the establishment, who held a post somewhat equivalent to the duties of house and land steward, had entered the service of the marchesa's father when a boy, and on her marriage had followed her to her new abode; he died not long after my arrival, and was mourned by the whole family with a degree of regret alike creditable to themselves and the departed. Indeed, the attachment mutually

subsisting between masters and servants in the old families of the Italian nobility, is one of the most amiable features of the national character. Almost every family we knew had at least one or two of these faithful old domestics in their employment, who, when no longer capable of even the moderate exertion demanded of them, were either retained as supernumeraries, or dismissed to their native villages with a pension sufficient to support them during the remainder of their days. It is very rare to hear of a servant being sent away; their slatternly and inefficient manner of discharging the duties allotted to them being overlooked, if compensated by honesty and attachment. A much larger number of servants are kept than the style of living would seem to require, or the amount of fortune in general to authorize; but it appears to be a point of dignity to have a numerous household, a remnant of the feeling of olden times, when the standing of the family was estimated by the number of its retainers. Many more men than women

are employed; and to this it is owing that the former discharge duties we are brought up to consider exclusively devolving upon females. Besides the culinary department, which is invariably filled by them, they sweep the rooms, make the beds, and are very efficient as sick-nurses. We knew a lady whose man-servant sat up for eighty nights to tend her during a dangerous illness.

The wages paid are excessively low to our ideas, a very small sum being given in money to female servants, the amount not exceeding from a dollar to fifteen pauls a month (4*s.* 6*d.* to 6*s.* 9*d.*), and to men from two to three dollars; but then there is always a liberal allowance of wine and flour, the produce of the family estates, generally much more than they can consume, and the surplus of which they are permitted to dispose of. Their daily fare is of a description that would ill suit the taste of English domestics, even in the most limited establishment: the quantity of meat provided for each is at the rate of six ounces per

day, which is boiled, and furnishes the never-failing soup and lessso. This constitutes their first, or mid-day meal; breakfast not being usual, or at most consisting of a draught of wine and a crust of bread. In the evening they sup; this repast being supplied by the *resti di tavola*—that is, remains of their master's table, which are carefully divided amongst them by the cook, who is usually a personage of great authority, having under him an assistant in his noble art, besides sundry barefooted little boys, who pluck poultry, run on errands, or idle about most satisfactorily.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the low scale of wages and living here mentioned is not applicable to English or other foreign families: it was always understood that *forestieri* paid more than natives; and yet, with these advantages, the servants seemed to think they were scarcely compensated for the absence of the freedom of intercourse which they had enjoyed under their former masters. We were considered proud, because we discouraged the system



of gossiping carried on among the natives, who allowed their servants to mingle a remark in the conversation while they were waiting at table, or to relate anything of the news of the town they might have heard. The contrast presented by our English reserve must indeed have been striking; and it was difficult at first for our attendants to reconcile themselves to it, or to be persuaded it did not really arise from harshness or displeasure. I have often thought we might with advantage copy a little in this respect from our continental neighbours, and, by treating our servants less like machines, cultivate the kindly feeling which should subsist between them and their employers; although I am very far from admiring the familiarity here described, which arises from the inherent love of talking and horror of solitude or silence, common to all Italians.

I witnessed some traits of this invincible garrulity, which amused me very much. A noble lady, living next door, used every morning to hold conversations with the

nursery-maid of a German officer's family, from opposite windows : the street not being more than ten feet across, it required scarcely more elevation of voice than is peculiar to Italian women, to possess herself of numerous interesting particulars respecting their mode of life, manner of feeding, dressing, and rearing their children, of the length of time this maid had been in their service, and so forth. My uncle's man-servant was detected in the gratification of a similar curiosity towards an opposite neighbour, the wife of a lawyer, to whom, from our hall-window, he was repeating the names of the *signorine* and the *cugina forestiera*, my unworthy self, with many little details of our tastes and pursuits, which apparently were received with avidity.

One of our acquaintances, with more than a usual share of inquisitiveness, used, whenever a message or note came from our house, to summon our envoy to her presence, and, while inditing an answer, would ply him with questions about our domestic arrangements, what we had for dinner, whether any

of the *signorine* were going to be married, and other inquiries of the same nature ; which would have been considered insufferably impertinent, were we not aware that every servant entering her house was subjected to a similar interrogatory, and that nothing unfair or unfriendly was intended by it. And yet it is wonderful to notice that the servants thus talked to, and let into all the prying weakness of their masters' dispositions, are never impertinent, nor outstep the boundary of the most obsequious respect and humility.

Strange, indescribable people ! I lay down my pen, and laugh as recollections without number of similar instances rise up before me ; and yet the moment afterwards, when I think of all the examples of their kindness of heart and good feeling which I could almost as easily recall, I despair of doing justice to them, or of conveying any idea of the never-ceasing contrast between the pathetic and grotesque that the Italian character presents. In all scenes of distress or affliction, their sympathy and charity

are very remarkable ; and it is beautiful to witness their untiring solicitude towards each other in sickness. Even young men, of apparently the most frivolous disposition, evince, under these circumstances, a tenderness and forbearance we are apt to consider the exclusive attribute of woman. No Italian, when ill, is ever left alone ; his friends seem to think they are bound to devote themselves to him, and divide the hours of watching according to their numbers or the nature of their avocations.

The case of a young man at Bologna, related to me by one of his medical attendants, who lingered for eight months in excruciating agonies from an incurable injury to the spine, was an affecting illustration of this devotedness. He had been gay and frivolous himself, and his companions shared more or less in similar failings ; but contrary to what is usually seen, after having partaken of his hours of pleasure, they did not fly from the scenes of pain his sick-room presented. They so arranged their attend-

ance upon him, that, out of eight to ten who were his most intimate friends, two at a time were always, night and day, by his side, ever watchful to mitigate, to the utmost of their power, the tortures under which he laboured. It was said, no woman's gentleness could have surpassed the care with which they used to arrange his bed, so as to procure him some alleviation from change of posture, or the patience with which they strove to cheer the failing hope and spirits of the sufferer.

Precisely in the same manner are frequent examples afforded of their unwearying attendance upon female relations or old friends; yet though no indecorum is attached to this practice, it would be unfair to say it is universal. In every instance, however, as I have before mentioned, the lady's sick-room is as open to gentlemen as the saloon; and there they are always found, in the hours appointed for receiving, seated near the invalid, detailing every little anecdote that can be of interest, and assuming an air of cheerfulness to keep up

her courage, and prevent her mind from becoming depressed.

It is singular, notwithstanding, that all this sympathy and kindness, which never fails throughout the longest illness, should shrink from witnessing the last struggles of expiring nature, and that the sufferer so long and carefully tended should be deserted in his last moments by those most dear to him. With that peculiar horror of death which characterizes them, as soon as it is evident the dying person's hours are numbered, that the *agonia* has commenced, and the passing bell has tolled, the nearest relations are not only removed from the chamber, but generally from the house, and often the priest alone remains to close the eyes, whose last gaze on earth had perhaps sought the faces of those most loved, and sought in vain.

The funeral is never attended by the relations, who are supposed to be too much overwhelmed by grief to appear in public; but the male friends of the deceased accompany the body on foot, carrying lighted torches

to the church at which the funeral-service is performed. This ended, it is lowered into the ancestral vault where moulder the remains of many generations. No hearse, or carriages, or mutes, form part of the procession: one or more priests lead the way, bearing a massive crucifix, followed by the *compagnia* of the parish—an association of laymen who, for pious purposes, always give their presence on similar occasions. They are preceded by the banner of their confraternity, each parish having a different emblem—such as a *Mater Dolorosa*, the Annunciation, or the Descent from the Cross—and a peculiar dress, consisting of a loose robe of scarlet, blue, or yellow. With torches in their hands, and chanting the accustomed *litania de' morti*, they produce an impression not easily forgotten. These are followed by different brotherhoods of monks, of the orders most protected by the deceased; and according to their numbers may be estimated his rank and possessions. Then comes the coffin, borne upon the shoulders of men shrouded in those awe-

inspiring peaked cowls, with slits for the eyes, so familiar to us in all pictures of religious ceremonies in Italy: the ends of the richly-embroidered pall are held by the most intimate friends, followed by the rest of the acquaintances; while the whole is closed by a motley crowd of all the beggars in the town—men, women, and children—who always flock to a funeral of distinction, to offer their prayers for the repose of the soul of the departed, and to receive the alms which are invariably accorded them.

Mourning is much less frequently worn than amongst us—in fact, only for the very nearest relations; but, when adopted, it is united to that retirement from the gaieties of society and subdued deportment which should certainly be its accompaniments; hence one never sees in Italy the indecent spectacle of a lady at a ball, resplendent in jet ornaments and black crape, which foreigners remark with astonishment is often witnessed in England. After the death of a parent, it would be considered very indecorous to be seen in any place of



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amusement until a year has elapsed. I remember hearing a young man censured for dancing at a small party ten months after he had lost his father.

Widows do not wear any peculiar costume, but are simply expected to dress in black and live in retirement for a year. In a country where the deepest affections are rarely connected with the marriage state, and where no conventional prejudices exist as to the width of a hem or the depth of a border, this is far more natural, and sometimes permits of the wearer's real feelings being discerned, by the appearance of the dress assumed on such occasions. Parents do not put on mourning for their children, which strikes one as more strange, considering the strong affection generally existing towards their offspring: and it also appears customary to endeavour to shake off the grief attendant on this loss by every expedient. I have seen an old man at the Opera not a month after the death of his grown-up son, and was told it was right and necessary he should have his mind diverted;

and the same plea was brought forward to justify the similar appearance of a lady in her accustomed box, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, only a few days after the death of her sister's husband; the poor widow being plunged in all the first bitterness of grief, as genuine and profound as it has been my lot to witness. So far from perceiving any impropriety in this action, if asked how she could have the heart to visit any scene of amusement at such a moment, she would have replied, that her sufferings had been so great, she required some *distrazione* for the benefit of her health; and this reason, by her country-people at least, would have been considered perfectly satisfactory.

## CHAPTER VII.

Desire of Carnival reversions—Dislike to being brought into contact with Austrians—The theatre—Public processions—Short-sighted policy of the Government.

It is Carnival-time, but only the name remains to mark the period intervening between Christmas and Lent; all the masquerades and revues associated with the season are now suspended. Since the Revolution of 1848-49, masks have been prohibited from the faculty these disguises afforded for holding political meetings, and making jokes against the Government; the use with which all was used to join in this unseasonable rivalry its interdiction a serious deprivation, and does not augment the goodwill with which the enactments of the past authorities are now regarded.

The balls at the Casino, which formerly

enlivened the Carnival, have likewise declined, from the unwillingness of the natives to mix in any degree with the Austrian garrison, the general and officers of which were of course invited to be present. Even those families of Codini, whose known retrograde principles rendered them well disposed towards the *Barbari*, were afraid of braving public opinion by appearing to be on good terms with the supporters of their pontiff; so that the Austrian officers, at the first public ball, to which they repaired with all their proverbial eagerness for the dance, found a large and handsome ball-room, brilliant lights and excellent music, but, alas, to their great chagrin, nought but empty benches to receive them!

The theatre is now the only neutral ground where all assemble; but even there the line of demarcation is very jealously observed, and it is only in one or two boxes of native families that the obnoxious white uniform is ever discerned. To an Italian, the theatre is home, senate, forum, academy—all and everything in life. He does not

go there half so much for the sake of the performance, as to fill up four or five hours of his daily existence, to see his friends, to hear what is going forward, to look at any strange face that may attract his notice, to contemplate from his stall near the orchestra the different flirtations carried on in the boxes above and around him, and to take his own share, perchance, in the numerous little comedies of real life that are here nightly performed, while the mock-drama on the stage forms but a minor part of the interests so curiously concentrated in this building.

There was but one theatre in the town—a very pretty structure, much larger and handsomer than would be met with in a provincial town in England; and all its accompaniments of dress, scenery, and orchestra on the same scale of superiority. Either operas or prose pieces were given, according to the seasons of the year and established custom. In the autumn, comedies and dramas were performed from September till the beginning of Advent,

when theatrical entertainments were suspended. From Christmas till the end of Carnival there was the Opera, succeeded during Lent by a dreary time of mortification. After Easter, the public spirits were sustained by the speedy prospect of a good spring campaign; and great excitement always prevailed as to the operas to be represented, the names of the singers engaged by the manager, whether the municipality, by assisting his funds, would enable him to give a ballet; and so forth.

Of course, none of the great vocalists, whom the north seems to have monopolized, were ever heard, although this theatre could often claim the distinction of having been the nursery in which they were trained, and their latent powers first called forth. The Government, impoverished as it is, with gaunt distress assailing it in the shape of houseless poor, decaying buildings, and an exhausted treasury, never hesitates to support and promote theatrical entertainments. The theatre, to an Italian population, is like a sweet cake to a fretful child:

it serves to stop its crying, and divert its attention for a moment, and the intelligent nurse is satisfied. It is a safe diversion: they cannot conspire or talk politics, for spies, as they well know, are largely mingled with the audience, and every movement or knot of whisperers would instantly be noted. The pieces performed are carefully selected, and none with any allusion to freedom, revolt, or anything of the sort permitted; for instance, a chorus containing the word *libertà* would be suppressed, or another word of different signification substituted for it. Auber's *Muta di Portici* is not allowed to be represented, because its hero, Masaniello, is the leader of a popular insurrection; nor Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell*, for similar reasons; besides many others that it would take too much space to enumerate. Verdi's *Ernani* is no longer given, although in the early days of Pius IX., when, after granting the amnesty to all political offenders, he was hailed as the regenerator of Italy, the scene in which Charles V. pardons the conspirators, and

exclaims, "*Perdono a tutti*," was received in every theatre of Italy with a frenzy of enthusiasm that must have been perfectly electrifying. It has often been described to me how in Ancona the whole audience used to sit hushed in reverential awe till the expected words had been pronounced, when, as with one voice and impulse, they would break forth into a wild clamour of applause, which had in it something inexpressibly thrilling and sublime.

But all this has passed away; the brief glory, the dream of independence, the unwonted exultation, with its lamentable reverse of ingratitude and folly, opportunities neglected, and powers misapplied. The day-star has risen again for their brethren, while the Anconitans are shrouded in even darker oppression than of yore, and heavier chains have been riveted upon them; yet stay, for I have wandered from my theme, which was of the garlands twined around their fetters, and of the gay strains and idle talk beneath which the patriot's sigh is often stifled. So let us go back to the interior of the theatre,



if you please, and take a survey of its various occupants.

It is seven o'clock, and the house is beginning to fill: clerks, shopkeepers, spies, artisans and their wives, Austrian soldiers, are taking their places in the pit, and the orchestra are tuning their instruments. As the overture begins, the frequenters of the stalls saunter into their usual places. Of these, the majority are the officers of the garrison, who always make a great clanking of their long broadswords, and always twirl their mustaches. The boxes, too, are rapidly becoming tenanted. Every family has its own, and the scene grows more animated as one bright well-known face after another appears in her accustomed seat.

The husband, in all well-regulated establishments, accompanies his wife to the theatre, and remains in the box until some visitor appears, which is generally the case as soon as she has been seen to enter. He then takes his leave, and does not trouble her with his presence till the close of the evening, to escort her home; as it would

be considered very insipid to be seen sitting long together, and infallibly be looked upon as the result of the lady's want of attraction, or the lack of resources on his side to fill up the time. Released from his attendance, therefore, as soon as the welcome sound is heard of the curtain at the door being drawn aside to give admission to a visitor, he hastens in his turn to commence a round of calls, to those ladies especially whose houses, when the theatre is not open, he is most in the habit of frequenting. Thus the leading belles gather round them their usual *società*, and they talk and laugh, as is their wont, without much regard to the performance, except at any favourite air or duet, when, as if by magic, the whole audience is silent and breathless with attention. The loquacity prevalent is sometimes annoying to the pit and gallery, particularly in a prose piece, when the actors are scarcely audible from the hum of patrician voices, and an angry "*Zitto, zitto!*" gives an indication of popular feeling. But even this departure from the usual orderly demeanour

of the people is very rare. It would be difficult to find more decorum and correctness of deportment than they present: there is no bad language, no quarrelling, no drinking—not even any popping of ginger-beer, or fragrance of orange-peel.

The same operas are repeated night after night, without intermission, for weeks. In the course of a season lasting nearly two months, seldom more than two operas are given, the expense of getting up a greater variety being of course one reason; while the taste of the Italians themselves leads also to their preferring the frequent repetition of their favourite composers, rather than a constant change, which, in music, they declare is a drawback to enjoyment.

The price of admission during the Carnival appears ridiculously low, the ticket being only fifteen bajocchi—equal to  $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ ; and a subscription for the season can be taken out for fifteen pauls— $6s. 9d.$ , which insures admission for every night, excepting benefits. In the spring, as there is a ballet besides the opera, the price is doubled; in

the autumn, when the *commedia*—the national term for dramatic representations—is given, it is only a paul—5*d.*

The boxes, as I said before, are all private property; each is partitioned off from the other, as at the Italian Opera in London. They are fitted up on either side with narrow sofas, on which the *società* lounge and gossip at their ease. Amongst their fair owners, the respective number of visitors is a great subject of heart-burning, it being an enviable distinction to have one's box constantly filled. As regards the toilet of the ladies, there is but little display: in winter, they are scarcely more dressed than for a walking out, many of them even retaining their bonnets; and on account of the extreme cold, it is often customary to send *chauffepieds* to keep their feet warm during the performance. The house is dimly lighted to English eyes, accustomed to the flaring gas of our own theatres, for there is only a large chandelier from the centre, and the foot-lights; but Italians are not fond of a strong glare, and resorting thither so con-

stantly as they do, a greater degree of brilliancy would prove fatiguing to the sight. The existing arrangement permits them to see and to be seen, and with this they are perfectly satisfied; and thus they go on, every night of the week while the season lasts—excepting Mondays, when an inferior singer takes the prima donna's place, and Fridays, when the theatre is closed—gossiping, trifling, complaining, but still led there by an irresistible impulse, a void in domestic life which, so long as English hearths and homes maintain their proud supremacy, will happily remain an unsolved mystery to us.

Amongst the few remaining of the popular diversions that used to be permitted in Carnival, are the public *tombola* or raffles, held on Sundays and Feste in the principal square of the town, to which the lowest of the people eagerly resort. No drunkenness or fighting is ever seen, although, amongst that vast crowd of priests, peasants, Jews, young caffè-loungers, shopkeepers and their wives, grisettes and gendarmes, at least one

or two thousand of the very dregs of the population are assembled, all intent upon the game, which is nearly allied to one I remember as a child, called Lotto, which we used to play at for sugar-plums.

On the balcony of the government palace, in a conspicuous position, is placed a wheel containing the numbers, ranging from one to ninety, which are drawn from it by a child blindfolded, and proclaimed aloud as they successively appear. The players, on payment of eleven bajocchi— $5\frac{1}{2}d.$  — are each furnished with a card containing three rows of figures variously transposed, so that no two cards are alike. Whoever has a corresponding number on his card to the one called out, marks it; and he who first can boast of an unbroken row of five numbers thus filled up, is the winner, and shouts out "*Tombola fatta!*" in a voice that makes the welkin ring, and flings his hat, if he be so fortunate as to possess one, into the air.

I do not believe the amount of the prize depends on the number of persons engaged

in the game; the value of the tombola to be played for is always known beforehand; some are of fifty, a hundred, or even more dollars, and the fascination of this pastime for the populace may therefore easily be imagined. Those who are too poor to afford the outlay necessary for a card, go into partnership with others, and often four or five are jointly interested in the purchase.

The scene during the drawing of the numbers is very picturesque, and is well set off by the old piazza, with its quaint irregular buildings, leading at the upper end by a semicircular ascent to the church of the Dominicans, in front of which is stationed the colossal statue of one of the popes—Clement XII., I think—in his pontifical robes and triple crown, forming the centre of a group of market-women, seated beside the baskets of fruit and vegetables they daily bring hither for sale. A little further down the Austrian band is stationed: it has been playing before the commencement of the game as only Austrian military bands can play; and the intoxi-

cating strains have wrought still higher the general expectation and ferment. Every balcony and window are tenanted by anxious players and lookers-on, for gentle and simple are equally ardent and absorbed; while the whole space beneath is filled up by the eager, clamorous crowd, watching their own or their neighbours' progress, as if life and death were staked on the result.

Handsome peasant-girls in gay holiday attire, saturnine, calculating priests, laughing milliners' apprentices, sturdy fishermen, tattered women, beggars in every stage of misery—here are groups that a painter would long to delineate, for, discernible upon all, stamped as if with nature's signet, is the impress of beauty and of race.

The clear wintry sun shines on those up-turned heads, and the blue unclouded sky forms a brilliant background to features of so much fire and animation, such coal-black kindling eyes, and figures of so much artistic outline and perfection, that the very originals of some of Raphael's master-pieces seem again presented to our view, and we



recognize faces whose lineaments are familiar to us in the Sacrifice at Lystra, or the Preaching at Athens.

As the game wears on, when nearly ninety numbers have been called out, and the result yet remains undecided, the thrill of agitation preceding each successive announcement,—the sudden silence, as if every one held his breath to catch the first sound on which his fate might hang,—is very remarkable and suggestive.

It is a grand spectacle of gambling, openly countenanced, nay more, encouraged by the Government, which sees not that in thus feeding the love of hazard and thirst for excitement in its subjects, it is but arming them with weapons that sooner or later will be employed to its own destruction.

But in their short-sighted policy, the Roman rulers discern nought but the expediency of furnishing the people with amusement, and turning their thoughts from politics. And when the diversions of the afternoon are ended, when the crowd disperses, as only an Italian crowd can dis-

perse, without shrieks, or jostling, or rough usage, while a murmur of animated voices diffuses itself through the streets, — no watchful eye seems to penetrate through this fair surface, no warning voice denounces what poison lurks in the anodyne which has been administered that day.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**The Lottery—Its miserable results—Evening parties—Absence of all ostentation—Poverty no crime—Grand supper on Shrove Tuesday—Reception of a Cardinal.**

THE national taste for gambling—so strikingly illustrated to the most casual observer in the excitement produced by the tombola—is still more perniciously fostered by the system of the government lottery, the existence of which produces the most baneful influence upon the country. As in the tombola, the numbers range from one to ninety, of which five are drawn every week at Rome. What is termed playing in the lottery, consists in staking sums, varying in amount at the pleasure of the player, upon one or more numbers, which, if they come up, yield prizes proportionate to the sum hazarded and the manner of the venture. For



instance, if a person decides upon three numbers—say 19, 27, 60—and plays upon what is called the *terno secco*, he receives no profit unless all three are drawn; but then, in case he is successful, his gain is infinitely more considerable than if he had stipulated for a prize should only two of his numbers appear. A *quinterno*—that is, for five numbers played on the same ticket to come up together—is very rare; yet there are not wanting instances of this extraordinary good-fortune, which are eagerly remembered, and have been fatal lures to many an infatuated player.

The *botteghini*, or lottery-shops, are constantly filled with the most idle and miserable of the population, who come to risk the few bajocchi they have stolen from the urgent wants of their families upon the numbers they may have dreamed of, or seen written upon a wall, or picked up on a slip of paper in the street, or that have been given them by some person supposed to be skilled in this species of divination. But this dangerous propensity is not confined to the lower classes

—all seem to play with reckless infatuation : the rich prelate, with the aim of still further augmenting his hoarded wealth ; the speculative trader, to gratify his love of hazard and excitement ; and the poor working-man, with the more simple motive of relieving the sharp penury of the moment, or realizing some vision of prosperity. The young artist ventures his quarter of a dollar every week on the *terno* selected by his lady-love, in the hope of a prize sufficient to enable him to gratify his dream of foreign travel and excitement ; the servant-girl has faith in the numbers given her by a white-bearded Capuchin, and plays them in the fond delusion of winning a dowry and a husband ; and that worn and wretched-looking woman, with three or four tattered children at her heels, and a puling swaddled infant in her arms, gaunt famine stamped on every feature, comes to stake five or six copper coins on the numbers she has dreamed her dead husband brought her in the night, and goes back to the damp cellar she inhabits, to indulge in restless anticipations of plenty and success.

The prevalence of the lottery tends to keep up superstition of the most debasing kind: omens, dreams, lucky or unlucky days, are noted, and the corresponding numbers eagerly sought for in books published for the purpose, a tattered copy of which is sure to be possessed by any family who can boast of a member sufficiently a scholar to decipher it. If a bat flies in at a window, the number analogous to this portent is looked out and played; if a favourite dish is dreamed of, the cabalistic volume is again consulted. On occasion of a criminal being executed, half the town plays numbers corresponding to the event itself, the culprit's age, and the nature of his crime.

Another popular method of invoking fortune is to consult priests and friars; amongst the latter, the Capuchins enjoy the greatest reputation for the success of their predictions. The most singular feature in the proceeding is, that as the clergy are forbidden to give numbers, the letter of this prohibition is very skilfully eluded by no allusion being made to the subject, but the priest, for ex-

ample, tells a story in which he brings in some striking circumstance, having, as he well knows, a direct reference to the dream-book, which is consulted accordingly.

It is altogether a grievous evil—a plague-spot extending far and wide. Many families, from comparative affluence, have been reduced to beggary by the indulgence of this passion. Even those who gain prizes appear to reap no lasting benefit from success; and amidst all the wonderful stories related of people being unexpectedly enriched by winning a large prize, I cannot at this moment remember one instance in which any permanent good has resulted from the lottery. Unfortunately, as it is a government monopoly, and yielding a large revenue, in the existing order of things there is no ground to hope for its suppression.

I have digressed again from the Carnival; and perpetually find myself painting in sombre colours, when I would fain impart a little light and liveliness to my picture. The truth is that I have little of gaiety to record; for it must not be overlooked that I am

writing about a country under the blight of an armed foreign intervention, and kept in control by the Austrian discipline of the stick. The only parties I remember during the so-called gay season were weekly evening réunions at the residence of one of the foreign consuls, where the lady of the house, a charming and gifted Parisian, drew together forty or fifty of the leading people of the place. It required the utmost effort of her amiability and liveliness, however, to accomplish this, for all spirit and wish for enjoyment seem to have forsaken the Italians, excepting their constancy to the theatre, which they cling to with the tenacity of old associations.

In these small parties, all the amiable features of the Italian nobility were brought to light—their freedom from affectation or ostentatious pride, their perfect good-breeding, and absence of invidious comparisons or vying with each other—points in which I fear the society of a provincial town in England, notwithstanding our boasted intellectual advantages, would be lamentably



inferior. The ladies dressed simply, but almost invariably in good taste; and, what was much to their credit, they whose circumstances would have enabled them to outshine the rest, never attempted any display; those, on the other hand, who were known to have very limited resources, made no struggles to appear rich, and had no feeble attempts at splendour, no incongruous putting together of faded flowers and Roman pearls—which, by the bye, are carefully eschewed in the land of their nativity—or tarnished feathers. A most graceful example of delicacy towards the feelings of such as were in restricted circumstances was set by the hostess, who, although belonging to one of the first and wealthiest families of France, and possessing a wardrobe stocked with all the novelties of Paris, always appeared in the same dress, without any ornaments of value; and amiable as she was to all her guests, she yet peculiarly devoted herself to those from whom she could receive no attention or hospitality in return.

Amongst the most regular in coming

every week, were a young couple whose situation excited universal sympathy. The contessina was the daughter of the last male representative of a very old but impoverished family, and was married to a native of Lombardy, but had been pursued by a series of misfortunes, which ended in the ruin and exile of her husband. Compelled to return with him to her own country in the utmost poverty, she was everywhere treated with as much consideration as if the wealth of Croesus was at her disposal. No one looked down upon her, though it was known she kept but one servant-girl, and always ironed her husband's shirts; and none of the ladies fancied it derogatory to dance with the poor refugee who gave lessons in drawing and mathematics, and was at his wits' end to provide a maintenance for his young wife and child. Evidently their poverty was no crime and no disgrace.

The style of these parties was perfectly simple and inexpensive. There was no supper, no constant eating and drinking, no incessant jingling of trays and glasses, or

adjournment to the refreshment-room. A tea-table, presided over by the hostess herself, or one of the ladies present, formed the great centre of attraction: people gathered in groups round it, not formally arranged, but some sitting, others standing—*les petits jeunes gens*, the adolescent beaux, making themselves useful, and handing the tea, in lieu of the attendance of servants, which, as tending to formality, was as much as possible dispensed with. This, with ices handed round once or twice later in the evening, was considered ample for the refectation of the company, who were quite delighted with the *trattamento*, as they termed it, and enjoyed their ices as children would do any particular treat. On ordinary occasions, the fashion of the natives was followed in this house; no refreshments at all being given but a little *eau sucrée*.

The amusements of the evening consisted of dancing, varied by one or two vocal pieces from some of the persons present, who, accompanied on the piano by a master, sang magnificently, as Italian amateurs always

do—since, unless especially gifted both as to ear and voice, they never cultivate the art; and for this reason, though less pretty singing is heard than in England, one escapes the infliction of much that is bad. The dancing was much as it is everywhere else—quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, and the cotillon, but carried on with unaffected spirit and pleasure. The young men, I especially remarked, did not enjoy that happy immunity from terpsichorean labours which, amongst us, they so much covet; and if one of the *gioventù* would fain have indulged in a sentimental meditation on a sofa, instead of joining in the dance, he was presently rebuked by two or three elderly gentlemen of the old school, who, after inveighing against the degeneracy of the present age, sent him humbled to seek a partner. A young Tuscan marchese, fresh from Florence, where probably he had been perverted by intercourse with British youths, was looked upon quite as a dangerous reprobate, for declining to dance quadrilles on the plea that they were *troppo papavero*—that

is; too poppy-like, too narcotic for his taste.

This, however, was the only exception to the general characteristics of good-humour and amiability which prevailed, and never flagged, till the end of the cotillon intimated that it was time to think of breaking up. When the night was fine, the most of the company walked; for the distances were not great enough, and the streets too steep, to render a carriage necessary or agreeable. Nobody ever seemed tired or cross; and as all went away in detachments, the sound of their talking and laughing could be heard at a considerable distance, and was the best tribute that could be paid to the elegant simplicity and kindness of their entertainers.

The only opportunity afforded me of seeing the society of Ancona displayed in all its ceremony and state, was on the evening of Shrove-Tuesday, the last day of Carnival, when one of the oldest and richest noble families gave a grand supper, according to established usage for many years. Then,

indeed, all the pomp of by-gone times was revived, and it was like a scene out of an old play to be met on the stairs by servants in state liveries bearing huge waxen torches, and ushered into the great hall, where stood the daïs or raised canopy, denoting the former dignity of the house as feudal princes, with the arms and quarterings emblazoned on hangings of scarlet velvet. From thence one passed through successive rooms, all brilliantly lighted, into the saloon, at the door of which the two younger sons of the family, Don Carlo and Don Girolamo, in the absence of their eldest brother, the Principe, and supported by several of the *amici di casa*, with deep bows performed the first part of the duties of reception. At the further end of this apartment was their mother, the Principessa, in black velvet and diamonds, who, on hearing the names announced, would, if the new-comer was a lady, advance a few steps to meet her with a dignity that was peculiarly her own, and, taking her hand, conducted her to the divan which ran round three sides of the room,

whereon a formidable row of silent figures, arrayed in brocaded silks and jewels, were deposited. Then, with a prolonged courtesy, which was in its turn acknowledged by a ceremoniousness of demeanour apparently looked upon as appropriate to the occasion, the stately old lady would return to her post. The men, on their entrance, advanced to where she stood, and bowed profoundly, followed by a circular reverence to the fair automatons stationed around, after which they backed out of the circle, and took their places in the ranks that filled the anteroom and doorways.

It was amusing enough to watch for awhile, and to speculate whether it was their fine clothes and their diamonds, or traditional ideas of etiquette, which had benumbed the whole assemblage, who for the most part were the same accustomed to meet on such friendly terms at the simple parties already described; when a great sensation was excited on the approach of the Cardinal —, a near relation of the Principessa, spending a few days in his native

city, on his way to the legation to which he was appointed. The sons, with the intimate friends, hastened to the head of the staircase, while the Principessa went as far as the first drawing-room to receive him. When he entered the saloon, she alone walked at his side; the rest, with two or three priests he had brought in his train, his secretary, chaplain, and so forth, flocked behind. All the ladies stood up at his coming, as if he had been a royal personage, nor did they resume their seats until he was placed in an arm-chair, beside which his cousin stationed herself.

About ten o'clock, the doors opening into the supper-room were thrown open; and as the Cardinal led the way, the ladies next, arm in arm, the men following *en masse*, a really brilliant spectacle presented itself. The room was large and lofty; the walls covered with crimson brocade, as also the gilded high-backed chairs and sofas; chandeliers hung from the richly-painted ceiling; other lights were reflected from sconces at the sides, and three or four large tables



with plates in their hands, eating, as happily as possible, their own share of what they had assisted in dispensing. They all said Lent was coming on too fast not to make the most of the present moment ; and certainly they were as good as their word. The cardinal gave his acquiescence to this opinion by a jovial laugh, and leaning back complacently in his chair, stretched out his legs, resplendent in their scarlet stockings, with an appearance of intense enjoyment.

As the hour drew on to twelve, an adjournment to the saloon was proposed, when coffee was brought in, and soon afterwards the *eminentissimo* gave the signal for departure. The same formalities were observed on his exit as attended his appearance, and he was accompanied down the stairs to his carriage by his young relatives and the other gentlemen who had received him, carrying silver candlesticks, in addition to the servants, who bore flambeaux. After he had gone, the guests rapidly dispersed, and went away cheerful and satisfied, to commence on the morrow the abstinence which, in all

conscientious families, was rigidly practised during Lent.

On our way home, we passed many houses where suppers were still going on ; for the custom of thus celebrating the last night of Carnival is universal ; and, from the patrician banquet I have described, down to the humblest artisan or shopkeeper, all endeavour to make good cheer to the utmost of their power. It is considered seemly, however, to separate early, in order not to invade the respect due to Ash-Wednesday ; so that the midnight chimes had not long ceased to reverberate, when silence and darkness enveloped the whole town so lately surrendered to feasting and enjoyment.

## CHAPTER IX.

Picturesque environs of Ancona—Dwellings of the peasantry—Their simplicity and trust—Manner of life and amusements—A wedding feast.

By way of an agreeable contrast to the patrician associations which surrounded us, we used in our walks to take great interest in noticing the peasantry or *contadini* of the environs; and circumstances having protracted my stay beyond what was originally intended, I was enabled, when the lovely month of April invited us to longer excursions, to see a good deal of their primitive mode of life. The town being small, with scarcely any suburbs beyond the gates, a very few minutes were sufficient to transport one from the dark, narrow streets to the open country, rich in its cultivation and

fertility, and beautiful in its undulating hills, its towering cliffs, and broad expanse of sea. Never have I known spring more lovely than amid these scenes: the glad blue sky, the fair blossoms and budding foliage, the fields of young corn gently waving in the breeze, the sweet scent of the violets with which the roadside banks were thickly strewn; the sense of beauty, the voiceless music, beneath whose spell each tiny leaf and blade of grass seemed sparkling and harmonious; and, above all, the sea, the silvery sea, so still, so majestic, so sublime—the whole rises to my memory in all its fascination of sunshine, and colouring, and perfume.

No stranger approaching by the high road from Florence, which follows the curve of the bay, with the promontory on which Ancona is built stretching forth like a gigantic arm to impede his onward course, and forming the boundary of the prospect, can have an idea of the nature of the scenery which lies behind this barrier, and is perhaps unique in its combination of all

the softest features of a pastoral region, with the lofty cliffs and sea-views of a grander landscape.

From the very gates, the land was laid out in small allotments or *possessioni*, each of barely a few acres in extent, planted with long rows of vines, intersected with patches of wheat, maize, and vegetables, that were studded with apple, peach, almond, and other fruit-trees. No barrier more formidable than a luxuriant hedge, a perfect wilderness of May-flowers, honeysuckles, and dogroses, divided the *possessione* from the road; the entrance was by a gate of very simple construction, surmounted by an arch with an image of the Virgin. Like Little Red Riding-hood, all one had to do was to pull up the latch and walk forward—not into the jaws of a perfidious wolf, but up a pretty avenue of mulberry-trees, with vines trained in festoons along their branches. A rude well—so picturesque in its shape that it never failed to bring to my mind the representations of Jacob's meeting with Rachel—always stood in the foreground,

while a little in the rear appeared the cottage of the occupants of the farm ; these dwellings of stone, blackened by time, were comfortless and primitive in the extreme, the windows unglazed, and the upper story accessible only by an uncovered staircase outside.

Two or three ragged little children were always at hand to carry news of a stranger's presence to their mother, who was perhaps tilling the ground at some little distance : the good woman soon made her appearance, barefooted, and carrying, admirably poised upon her head, a large pitcher of water, with another of equal size supported on her hip ; in her other hand she bore the coarse broad-brimmed straw-hat which was in general her protection from the sun. Her costume consisted of a petticoat of scarlet and blue-striped cotton, with a bodice or stay of a different colour, from beneath which appeared the white sleeves of the shift, reaching to the elbow, where they were fastened in and terminated with a frill, much as is seen in engravings of

Raphael's Fornarina; around the throat and shoulders was a handkerchief, so scrupulously adjusted as barely to disclose the coral necklace, without which even the poorest contadina would think her everyday attire incomplete. There was often much beauty in the face set off by this picturesque equipment, for, however worn and sunburnt it might be, it could usually boast of jet-black tresses, dark vivacious eyes, well-cut features, and the whitest possible teeth. The welcome, too, was pleasing—no constraint, no bashfulness, but a straightforward, hospitable simplicity that won its way immediately to the heart. We were perfectly at liberty to come in and look about us, ask questions, and rest ourselves, and were secure of giving unbounded delight if, on coming away, we purchased fruit or eggs to the value of a few *baiocchi*.

After one or two visits of this nature, we were quite on a footing of intimacy, and the mother and children would seat themselves round us, to indulge in a little conversation. If we chanced to come on a

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*fiesta*, or when the daily toil was over, the circle would be increased by the father and his grown-up sons, who, in their rough but not unmusical peasant dialect, plied me with inquiries about the country I came from, and its peculiarities, such as whether we had a moon there, and what the people ate. In a fashion they had all heard of England, as a wonderfully rich and large city; but its inhabitants being heathens, was what had principally impressed itself upon their minds, and awakened their regrets. In all that regarded themselves, they were very communicative; and in one possession especially, where the bond of union was cemented by their having supplied my uncle's household with milk for several years, they used to tell us of all their domestic concerns, from the courtship of Celestino, the eldest son, who was *promesso* to a neighbouring *contadina*, to the pearl earrings and necklace which Orsolina, a pretty laughing damsel, the only daughter of the family, had just received as a troth-plight from her affianced



swain. I remember, as an instance of their perfect trust in us, that, after having displayed these valuables with a great deal of pride, the girl put the little pasteboard box containing them into my cousin Lucy's hand, and proposed she should take them home to show her sister, *l'altra signorina*, whom a trifling indisposition had confined to the house.

The frugality with which these peasants live is surprising, particularly when one sees what a fine, hard-working race they really are. Their food consists in great measure of bread, made of equal proportions of ground beans and the flour of Indian corn, of which, every morning, all the members of the family are furnished with a supply before setting out on their different avocations. At noon, they assemble for dinner, which is of *polenta*—Indian corn-meal stirred into boiling water till it becomes about the consistency of thick oatmeal porridge; it is then poured out on wooden platters, and eaten with no other condiment than salt. Bread, and a mode-

rate draught of wine—or, in summer, occasionally vinegar and water—complete the repast. In the evening, they sup on bread and salad, or an onion, or fennel-root, or raw beans. Meat they never taste, except on Sundays or the great *feste*; and then it is in so small a quantity, and so boiled down by having been made into soup, that it cannot convey much nourishment. Singularly enough, they have a prejudice against milk; and when a cow is kept for the purpose of supplying the consumption of the town, they make no use of it themselves: in those cases where any is left upon their hands, it is always given to the pig.

In summer, when the labours of the day are at an end, they assemble on the threshing-floor adjacent to the house, and dance to the music of a tambourine, which is played successively by the different members of the family; even children of six or seven years old often take their turn, and beat the rural instrument with great spirit and precision. Their national dance,

called the *saltarello*, does not exhibit much variety of figure : the two performers stand facing each other, the woman holding her dress spread out, her partner with his hands in an easy attitude on his hips : thus prepared, they set off, advancing and retreating, doubling and pursuing, circling round and round each other, in a quick hopping sort of step, always keeping admirable time, and accompanying the music by a sort of hissing sound, which appears to have an exhilarating influence. As soon as one couple pause to take breath, another is ready to step forward ; while the interest of the spectators and the animation of the dancers never seem to flag : sometimes the old people, the elders of the group, become so excited, that they start up, push aside the younger ones, and foot it away with a nimbleness and dexterity which call down general applause.

Their households are generally large, for, as the sons grow up, they invariably marry, always in succession, according to their birthright, and bring their wives home to

the paternal roof, unless one has a religious vocation and becomes a priest, or a lay-brother in some order of friars. As soon, however, as they become too numerous, the *padrone*, the owner of the land, steps in to say he will not have so many useless mouths upon his property; so then one at least of the junior branches is obliged to look out for another possessione to cultivate.

The terms on which they hold these farms, and the system pursued between landlord and tenant, are very different from English usages. No rent is paid, but the produce is equally shared; the proprietor receives his half of everything in kind—so many measures of corn, so many jars of oil, and barrels of wine; nay, even to the vegetables and poultry daily brought into the market for sale, there is understood to be an exact division. It is looking after these petty details of their property, and regulating their multifarious accounts, which forms the occupation of the industrious nobles. Among the wealthiest of these

proprietors, some own as many as 50, 60, or even 100 possessioni, varying in size and value from £30 or upwards yearly income to the possessor, down to those that do not yield him more than £12 or £14 clear profit; which last, however incredible it may seem, give support to a family of five or six in number on the premises. Of course, it cannot be supposed that the shares are very equitably divided; indeed, it is always considered that the fruit and vegetables daily consumed by the peasants are exclusive of this arrangement; but then, to counterbalance this, the padrone also has his perquisites, in a stipulated number of fat capons at Christmas, eggs and a lamb at Easter, and the choicest of the grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates, quinces, &c., to be stored for winter use.

On the whole, a great deal of harmony between the two classes seems to prevail; the landlord is always consulted as to the marriage of any of the contadino's family, and is expected to grace their wedding and christening festivities with his presence,

and to stand godfather to the first child. In the times when it was customary even amongst persons of the highest rank to send their children out into the country to be nursed, a peasant woman from one of the possessioni was selected for the office of *baglia*, and the infant *marchese* or *principe*, as the case might be, duly swaddled and sparingly washed, passed the first year or two of his existence in perfect equality with his foster-parents and their children. Even now, when this practice among the nobility is obsolete, except in the case of some stony-hearted and prejudiced old *suocera*, similar to the one I have already given an account of, the wet-nurse is always chosen from among the family's rustic dependents; and, if careful and devoted to her charge, is so kindly and liberally treated during her stay at the *palazzo*, that a mutual feeling of affection and gratitude is invariably the result, manifesting itself throughout life by protection and assistance on the one hand, and little freewill-offerings upon the other.

The observances of the peasants in regard to their weddings and courtships are very curious, and date from time immemorial; indeed, neither in their mode of dress nor form of speech do they appear to be sensibly affected by the fashions of the day; and I have been told by good authorities, that in many respects they are as their forefathers were 300 years ago. After a young man has signified to a girl's parents his wish to marry her, and has satisfied them as to his circumstances, present or prospective, he is allowed to visit at the possessione on Sundays and holidays, though under considerable restrictions. The young people are not allowed to go together to fairs or merry-makings, or even to talk alone, except when separated by a hedge or paling; and here even their attitudes are prescribed by rigid custom. The *promesso* is not to look too earnest or taken up; while the girl is enjoined to keep her eyes cast down, and to busy herself in plaiting the strings of her apron into numberless small folds, of which they of course retain the impression; and

to be able to display these evidences of having an admirer, whenever the rustic belles meet at church, is quite a point of rivalry amongst them.

In conformity with the system prevailing through all classes in Italy, the peasant-bride is expected to be furnished with a *trousseau*, and even in this humble sphere it is surprising what an amount of linen and clothes is considered indispensable. She would be thought poor indeed who could not number every useful article of wearing apparel by a dozen of each kind, besides providing a chest of drawers, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. The dresses are fewer in number—not exceeding perhaps the wedding-gown, which amongst the more affluent peasantry is of silk, and a couple of cotton ones, reserved for *feste*—the usual costume being the corset, with a coloured petticoat. To accumulate this stock is the object of a contadina's life, almost from the time she can first speak or run alone, and every nerve has been strained towards its attainment; either in working in the pos-



sessione and carrying the produce to market, or as a washerwoman, or rustic sempstress, or in weaving cloth, the most patient self-denial and unintermitting industry are displayed, and kept up for a long series of years. Comparatively with the population of the towns, the peasantry marry late, the *sposa* being often four or five and twenty before the *corredo* is completed on her side, or the bridegroom has saved enough to furnish the earrings and necklace of real, though of course small and irregular pearls, he is expected to present.

The day before the wedding, all the bride's friends and companions assemble, and carry her property with great pomp to the dwelling of her future husband's parents, with whom the young people are to take up their abode. The more things displayed, the greater the envy and congratulation. To enhance the effect, they form a sort of procession, every one bearing on her head some portion of the paraphernalia; each drawer is carried separate from the chest, the contents having been carefully ar-

ranged, and submitted to public inspection ; then comes a damsel with the pillows ; then another with a small looking-glass, and so forth ; all talking and shrieking with delight, while a donkey laden with the mattress soberly brings up the rear.

The next morning, they all repair in their best clothes at an early hour to the sposa's house, and assist at the important business of her toilet. Her costume consists of the long-coveted silk dress, which is sometimes the gift of the padrone, the favourite colour being lilac. It has been made in town, and is very tight in the waist, evidently uncomfortable to the bride, who is furthermore inconvenienced by the unwonted restraints of shoes, open-worked stockings, and white cotton gloves. The headgear is a white kerchief, or square veil, lightly placed upon the elaborately-plaited tresses, and the ends falling loosely upon the shoulders, which are, as usual, so studiously covered as to afford but a glimpse of the comely rounded throat, whose dark, clear skin sets off the rows of pearls by which it is encircled. At the

church they are met by the bridegroom, with his friends and relatives ; and after the religious ceremony and nuptial benediction, the whole party adjourn to the bride's new residence, where the wedding-feast is held. In some districts, however, where their quaint old usages are still strictly adhered to, they separate at the conclusion of the service, which is performed on a Thursday ; and the spousa returns to the house of her parents, doffs her gay apparel, and resumes her wonted occupations. For the two following days, nothing is seen of the bridegroom ; but on the Sunday morning the same joyous preparations as for the marriage-ceremony are renewed, and the same glad trains set forth, and meet at the village church, whence, after hearing mass, they all repair, arm in arm, the sposo leading the way to the possessione of his parents, where a great dinner celebrates the event.

The bill of fare on these occasions is more substantial than elegant ; as if to indemnify themselves for so seldom partaking of animal food, their wedding-tables are furnished with

little else. The repast begins with macaroni, dressed with coarse cheese, gravy, and spices; after which there come quantities of meat, boiled, stewed, and roasted; pigeons and fowls, all with most incongruous sauces of eggs and garlic, vinegar and sugar; upon the composition of which two or three cooks, friends of the family, who have condescendingly volunteered their services for the occasion, have been displaying their abilities. Sweet dishes they do not seem to care for, excepting sometimes *Zuppa Inglese*—sponge-cake, soaked in rum, and covered with custard, so named in compliment to our national taste for ardent spirits, supposed indispensable to a Briton's daily refection. The padrone is seated at the right hand of the sposa, and enters very unaffectedly into the jokes and hilarity of the company; sometimes, under the influence of excitement, one of the party breaks forth into an *improvisazione*, and chants a rude epithalamium in honour of the newly-wedded pair. The native wine circulates freely, and healths are drunk, and showers of sugar-plums discharged at the

bride, amidst roars of laughter. These *confetti*, which are villainous compounds of almonds and plaster of Paris, hold the same place at weddings in Southern Italy that bridecake does in England; and are distributed as presents amongst the friends and relations of the families.

## CHAPTER X.

[A rural christening—The young count.

RURAL christenings, particularly that of the first child, are celebrated much in the same manner. We received an invitation to one in the spring, at the house of some peasants, who were not personal friends, but who asked us out of compliment to a Polish lady, a patroness of theirs, who was to stand god-mother, and with whom we were very intimate. As the ceremony always takes place the day following the birth of the child, we were apprized of the event as soon as it occurred, and requested to hold ourselves in readiness at an early hour the following morning. We set out, a merry party—our friend and her two daughters, my cousins and myself, besides the two ladies-maids of the establishments, friends or con-

nections of our host's, wild with delight, yet never throughout the day transgressing the bounds of the strictest respect towards us. Outside the gates of the town, we found the contadino, all smiles and importance, with his *biroccio*—a primitive cart, rudely painted with heads of saints, wreathed with flaming red and yellow roses, and drawn by two white oxen—waiting to convey us to the scene of festivity. Here we also met the Conte M——, the young owner of the possession, a perfect stranger to all of us, but who was to be associated in the sponsorial duties with Madame V——, or *la Consolessa*—as she was generally termed, in allusion to the official rank of her husband, who was consul for one of the northern Powers. The introduction was soon effected by his tenant, in compliment to whom all superfluous etiquette seemed laid aside, and the count gallantly placed at our disposal his equipage—a very high, antiquated barouche, with a step like a ladder; to this vehicle was harnessed a cow, the hills we had to ascend being considered too steep for horses; and

in it our friend, one of her daughters, myself, and the padrone were accommodated ; while the rest of the party took their seats on two rough benches in the cart, which, by way of awning, had a sheet supported on four canes.

Our road lay through a lovely country, alternating from hill to vale, and at every ascent beautiful glimpses of sea varying the prospect. As we toiled slowly along, the contadino chiefly left his biroccio to the care of a little boy, and walking beside the carriage, devoted his attention to his landlord. Their conversation was very animated, and turned upon the state of the country, their prospects for the harvest, the hardship of being deprived of firearms by the Austrian general (the Pontifical States were then, as now, under martial law), the consequent boldness of the robbers who infested the neighbourhood, and their inability to resist them ; besides many other matters connected with their mutual interests. In about two hours' time, we arrived at the place of our destination, and the assembled friends came out to the gate to welcome us : there were



all the nearest of kin on both sides, the fathers, the mothers, the brothers and sisters, besides others more remotely connected, and affording in their contrasts of old age and childhood, decrepitude and vigour, an admirable study of grouping and physiognomy.

The first stage of proceedings was to conduct us to the house, which was as rude and comfortless as most of its description, the ground-floor being shared between the silkworms and cows, and the upper story, inhabited by the family, being attainable only by a steep outer staircase. At the threshold we found some more venerable dames, by whom we were ushered—the padrone amongst the rest—to pay our respects to the young mother, who lay smiling in her bed, the tiny stranger by her side, all swathed and swaddled, and her gossips talking and chattering around her, or bustling to and from the kitchen, which adjoined her room, in utter violation of every orthodox rule of quiet and good nursing. From thence, as soon as we were considered sufficiently rested, we were marshalled for the christening—a little girl

of twelve years old, the contadino's sister, carrying the baby, and the rest all following in order. It was then, as we went along, that the terrible fact of our being heretics began to transpire, and I was amused at the pitying interest with which we were surveyed: on entering the village church, in particular, when it was remarked we took no holy water, nor crossed ourselves, we overheard one old woman whisper to her cronies, "*Peccato, non sono Cristiane!*" and the little children, clinging to their grandams' skirts, peered at us inquisitively with their glorious black eyes gleaming through the tangled golden hair which hung about them like a mane.

The church was built in the shape of a Latin cross, with no pretensions to architectural merit or high antiquity; the walls whitewashed, and with no ornaments beyond the crucifixes, candlesticks, and vases of artificial flowers upon the principal altar at the upper end, and in the two small chapels or recesses at either side, in which also mass could be celebrated. Two confes-

sionals, a few benches, and a number of rush-bottomed chairs piled in a corner, completed the fittings-up, if we except three large pictures, of which one was suspended over each altar; they were in oils, evidently originals, and of no modern date, though from a very inferior hand—some unpromising follower, perhaps, of the Caracci or Domenichino; for it is from the school of Bologna that the paintings found in the environs of Ancona seem principally to have been supplied. The subjects were the Crucifixion, the Assumption of the Virgin, and the Virgin as a child tending some lilies, which grew up miraculously beneath her touch. In the same chapel as this last, and immediately beneath it, so placed that the frame, which was surmounted with a wreath of flowers, should incline considerably forward, was a very small discoloured head of the Madonna, as Mater Dolorosa, her hands clasped, holding a heart, from whence seemed to proceed flames of fire. A lamp was burning before this, and a number of votive hearts and crosses were fastened

around ; these, one of the old men, while we were waiting for the *curato*, informed me were all offerings which had been made in return for miracles that Madonna had performed. He had known of pilgrimages made here which were almost as efficacious as to the shrine of Loretto. He looked wistfully at me as he said this, and slipping away soon after, I saw him kneeling before the picture with an expression of such unmistakable fervour in his upturned face, that I felt persuaded he was praying heart and soul for our rescue from perdition.

As soon as the priest, who had been detained some little time in the sacristy, made his appearance, the ceremony was performed, and then the baby was handed round to receive the greetings of its sponsors and ourselves, on which occasion, be it said, a convenient opportunity was afforded for slipping a slight donation amongst the swathes with which the hapless infant was encumbered ; after which all the relations pressed forward, and men as well as women kissed the little *creatura*, as they termed it,

with great affection, and carried it back in triumph to the mother, who forthwith hung a bag of relics round its neck.

I should be guilty of insincerity if I concealed that the two hours which intervened between the banquet were somewhat wearying. It was too hot to walk out, nor was there any shade in the possessione; we had exhausted our little topics of conversation with our hostess, who was, besides, much occupied with her son; and no resource appeared but to sit in the apartment where the cloth was being laid with indescribable clatter both of plates and tongues—a very small room on the other side of the kitchen, furnished with a table and benches, from which the bed had been removed for the occasion—or to walk into the kitchen itself, and contemplate the preparations for dinner.

Our party had been increased by the young *curato*, the son of a neighbouring *contadino*, who seemed rather agitated at the presence of so many ladies, and apparently looked for countenance and protection

to the count, who having but recently returned from completing his education at an ecclesiastical seminary, had not yet learned to manifest that utter contempt for the priestly office which the youth of Italy generally display. Madame V——, who had a great respect for all spiritual authority, also hastened to the rescue, and engaged the poor priest in a conversation about his parishioners and the state of his church, on which he talked very fluently; but unfortunately, on her proceeding to tell him of various missions to Madagascar and China, in which she took great interest, he showed himself so completely at fault, apparently considering she alluded to some towns in the Turkish dominions, that she hastened to change the subject, to prevent our discovering any further deficiencies.

Meantime the count, who, by the bye, was not a very brilliant specimen of the Anconitan gioventù, acquitted himself of his arduous duties with tolerable ease, notwithstanding that the trammels of his education still hung about him, and he looked rather

too demure and artificial; above all, he was dazzled by the spectacle of four or five girls, who laughed, talked, ventured to express an opinion, and did not keep their eyes immovably cast down. He certainly did not get on so well with us as with his tenant; we had very few subjects of interest in common; his family was one of the most strict and old-fashioned in Ancona, and his mother and sisters were rarely seen in society, or even beyond their own walls. We remarked to him that we never met them out, and he said that his mother disliked walking, and did not approve of trusting her daughters with any one but herself; so they only went to mass on Sundays and *feste*; and then in the afternoon, by way of taking the air, as well as for recreation, they repaired to a terrace on the roof of their house, from whence they enjoyed a distant view of the public gardens outside the Porta Pia, with all their promenaders, and the Corso delle Carrozze. Remembering the scanty rows of trees and patches of brambles dignified by this appellation, as well as the half-dozen

antediluvian equipages therein displayed, it was scarcely possible to refrain from smiling; but as he spoke in perfect seriousness, I was compelled to check all tendency to mirth, and prosecute my inquiries. Why did not he, then, sometimes escort his sisters? He looked astonished, and replied, that his mother did not think this proper—other young men, his friends, might join them—in fact, it was not according to their ideas. This was a trait of manners so unique as to surprise even my cousins, accustomed as they were to the code of Ancona propriety; but they listened with provoking equanimity, and seemed more diverted at my amazement than at anything else. “These poor people understand nothing of domestic life, or the happiness of domestic intercourse,” whispered Lucy, pityingly; “brothers and sisters are very different here from what they are in England.”

The two lively Polish girls, however, came to my assistance, though under certain reservations. “Ah, *par exemple*,” cried Natalie V——, who, with her sister, had



not long returned from completing her education at a convent in France, "that is extraordinary ! I remember at Les Oiseaux, that several of the girls had brothers, who were allowed to see them in the *parloir* alone ; and I know, when they returned home, they used to walk out with them sometimes. *Pour aller dans le monde*, certainly not ; but if our brother was here instead of in the Caucasus, poor fellow, you should see, Monsieur le Comte, that Olga and I would outrage *les convenances* a little !"

The youth thus apostrophized smiled dubiously, and attempted to express that had he such charming sisters to accompany, he should be glad to enjoy the privileges of other countries ; but being a novice in such matters, he broke down suddenly, and again fell a prey to my inquisitorial propensities. Was he fond of reading, and did he ever read aloud in the evening to his sisters while they worked ? At this he fairly laughed, and said that *libri di devozione* were all very well while one was in the seminary, but he had had enough of them

there, and knew the *Vita de' Santi* by heart, and therefore always kept out of the way when any *lettura* was going on.

"Then they are never allowed to read stories, or history, or—or romances?" I proffered the latter suggestion very hesitatingly, it must be owned.

"Oh, no—of course not: his mother said girls must attend to the affairs of the house and to their religion; but as to books of entertainment, or travels, or anything of the sort, the less they read of them the better, as their heads would inevitably be turned, and they would be wanting to rove about the world, or be thinking about marriages of affection and lovers"—and at this last word he blushed.

Thus foiled at every effort, the conversation had almost come to a stand-still, when the noise, the stamping of feet, the clanging of *casseroles*, and hissing of frying-pans, reached their climax, a huge dish of macaroni was brought in, and we were told to *restart serviti*. No entreaties could induce any of our hospitable entertainers to seat them-

selves at table—they all insisted upon serving us; and between the intervals of carrying in the dishes and changing our plates, repaired to the kitchen, where our handmaids were also regaled, and made merry with right good-will. An amusing incident occurred just before we took our places, when Madame V—— and all of us stood up, and she motioned to the young curate to say grace: he grew very red, began in Latin, then stopped abruptly, and whispered to the count imploringly, “I have forgotten it: what am I to say?”

“*Via, Via,*” was the rejoinder: “say anything, say a *benedicite*,” which being hastily gone over, the poor priest, in much confusion, explained that he really did not not remember any formula, being accustomed only to make the sign of the cross and say a paternoster.

The repast so closely resembled what I have described as usual at the marriage-feast, that any recapitulation would be tedious; neither vegetables nor fruit appeared, for they would have been considered

too like every-day fare to do fitting honour to the occasion. As usual in such cases, one had to choose the alternative of eating and drinking to excess, or mortifying the good folks, whose hearts were set upon seeing us do justice to their good cheer. Wine, both red and white, abounded; and the young padrone took as much interest in its merits as the contadino himself, recommending the different qualities, and telling us of the various ways of preparing them. To the guests in the kitchen it was just as liberally dispensed, but no instance occurred of its abuse; there was not even any approach to uproarious hilarity.

No quarrel or dispute impaired the harmony of the day; all the best features of the peasants' character had been displayed—their hospitality, their courtesy, their simple piety; and as we wended homeward, walking through lanes and vineyards a portion of the way to the foot of a declivity, where the biroccio and carriage awaited us, we were enthusiastic in our praises. As a landed proprietor, the count was naturally

pleased at these encomiums on his tenantry ; but he somewhat damped our ardour by assuring us that we must look upon the contadini we had just quitted not as specimens of the whole race, but exceptions. "Through all the Pope's States," he said, "the country people round Ancona are remarked as being generally good and well-conducted ; but if you go only a short distance into the interior, a great difference is perceptible ; and beginning at Loretto, which is only twenty miles from here, they are all noted for their implacability and revenge." And then, by way of illustration, he related some startling stories of treachery and murder, with as much coolness as if they were everyday, straightforward occurrences. These narratives brought us to our equipages, in which we placed ourselves in the same order as when we came, but without much attempt at conversation ; the young count, or hero of the day, as we had named him, fell into a reverie, which we attributed to fatigue, and Madame V——, in her excellent motherly

way, recommended him to retire early, and take a *lait de poule*. But two days afterwards furnished an elucidation of this mystery, in a visit to the *Consolessa* from the priest of her parish, who had been requested by Count M—— to inquire if her daughter Mademoiselle Natalie's hand was at liberty, and the amount of her dowry. The first of these questions, however, not being answered in a manner favourable to his wishes, there was no necessity for entering into a specific reply to the second.

Disappointed, but not dismayed, the trusty envoy presented himself, very shortly after, to my uncle, with similar interrogatories relative to the *cugina forestiera*, to which the proviso of a change of religion was subjoined. It is needless to give the tenor of his answer, or to add, that this adventure often furnished us with many amusing recollections, and was a magnificent termination to our christening-party.

## CHAPTER XI.

Lent observances—Compulsory confession—The sepulchres on Holy Thursday—Procession on Good Friday—Blessing the houses—Joyful celebration of Easter.

In my last chapter, I find I stepped somewhat abruptly from winter to spring, and talked of merry-makings in the country, while in the one immediately preceding it, I left the good townspeople of Ancona enjoying their last night of Carnival, with the dreary prospect of a supperless, theatreless Lent before them. The amusements of the so-called gay season had not been sufficiently numerous to render the transition very remarkable to a superficial observer, yet in many little ways the regulations peculiar to this period were felt as a thorn in the flesh, and conveyed with them some mortification to those by whom they were

conscientiously carried out. For instance, their dietetic rules were rather peculiar: it was not allowed to make more than one full meal a day, to eat any supper at night, or to take milk above once in the twenty-four hours; on Friday and Saturday of every week, milk was wholly forbidden; besides a number of similar enactments, which depended on the bishop of the diocese, who every Lent issued a fresh table of regulations, modified according to his ideas, or to the actual condition of the country.

In some of the churches, friars or Jesuit fathers, specially summoned for the purpose, delivered a course of sermons, inveighing against the prevailing irreligion and unbelief. But if the preacher's talents were only of an average description, his audience was limited to a few ladies and old women: when, on the contrary, he happened to be distinguished by a flowery and popular style of eloquence, all classes would flock to hear him, numbers of young men amongst the rest, who came in and out, lounged against the columns, talked to-



gether in the pauses, stared at their acquaintances, carried on a little flirtation—in fact, conducted themselves much as if they were in the pit of a theatre. In the same way, any great *funzione*, where good music and singing were sure to be heard, never failed to attract the gioventù in crowds to the church in which it was celebrated; while the stimulus of a higher motive than mere curiosity, or the employment of an idle hour, never appeared to be felt, or even dreamed of. This total absence of religion, or rather of all religious belief, is spreading fast, and, no longer confined to young men of fashion as their exclusive prerogative, is descending to the lower classes of the community, who, discontented and repining, and debarred from all means of enlightenment, look upon the blended temporal and spiritual system of their Government with the same hostility and mistrust.

Towards the close of the Holy Week, however, the whole population becomes compulsorily devout. The parochial clergy go round to every house in their jurisdic-

tion, taking down the names and ages of the inhabitants, and delivering to all a ticket filled up with their name, requiring them to repair, within a given period, to the parish church, for confession and communion. Any freewill-offering, any spontaneous act of grace in these religious duties, is thus lost; and with the young men especially, *prender Pasqua*, as it is termed, becomes a most irksome task, which they endeavour to shuffle over, or resort to every expedient and deception to evade altogether. The Government, however, has always been very strict in enforcing this ordinance, with the *political* view of maintaining its fast-waning influence through the confessional, going even the length of refusing pontifical subjects their passports, if they require to travel, when it can be proved that they have neglected their Easter duties—an odious abuse of authority, tending to bring religion into contempt.

I remember hearing of the astonishment and indignation of some members of the V—— family, the first year they passed in

Ancona, when the priest, having taken the statistics of the household, and ascertained that they professed the Roman Catholic faith, handed to each of them in succession a printed ticket, requiring them to conform to this law. In France, they declared, they had never heard of such a measure; and they could not, even before us, forbear from expressing their disgust. It required all their mother's persuasions, and the example of her unquestioning submission to whatever emanated from priestly authority, to stifle the murmurs of the young ladies, and enforce their obedience.

On Holy Thursday, after mid-day, an unwonted silence seemed to fall upon the town, unbroken till the same hour on Saturday. No bells were tolled, no matins or vespers rung, no mass celebrated in the churches; while the streets were filled with people hastening to the *sepolcri*, or sepulchres, of which seven must be visited by the faithful. Each church has its *sepolcro*, varying in the details, but agreeing as to the general characteristics of the representation. The high-altar is di-

vested of its usual ornaments, in token of mourning; and on the platform immediately before it, surrounded by all the emblems of the Passion, is a figure in wax, of life-size, of the Saviour, as if just removed from the cross. All around, and on the steps leading up, are a profusion of natural flowers and tapers; and sentinels with arms reversed are stationed at intervals to keep back the crowd.

In some churches more figures are introduced—such as Joseph of Arimathea, the Beloved Apostle, the three Maries; others have a greater display of flowers and wax-lights, but the pervading effect in all is invariably the same. The complete stillness; the ceaseless, noiseless swaying of the crowd, as those who occupy the foremost places, after a few minutes' admiring inspection, and a few muttered prayers, quietly give room in their turn to fresh comers; the indiscriminate blending of rich and poor, as the lady in her silken robes kneels on the pavement beside the tattered beggar; the motionless forms of the Aus-

trian soldiers in all the glittering panoply of war, surrounding the marred and blood-stained effigy of the Prince of Peace; the saturnine, matter-of-fact faces of the attendant priests and sacristans, who hover about, re-lighting any taper that is accidentally extinguished, or adjusting any of the arrangements that may be displaced; the air heavy with the scent of flowers mingling with the exhalations of the vaults beneath, where moulder the remains of those who in their day have gazed upon this spectacle, for centuries repeated, for centuries unchanged: all this has struck each stranger in his turn, and is but a feeble transcript of the varied impressions it produces.

On Good Friday, there is always a procession through the principal streets of the town, which, without any of the devotional accessories of the sepolcri—the time-worn churches, the subdued light, the hushed voices—cannot fail painfully to impress the English spectator who has not been inured to sights of this description.

By the people it was eagerly looked for-

ward to as a pleasant variety in the monotony of their lives, an opportunity of sauntering about, of looking out of the windows, of nodding to their acquaintances, and furthering some flirtation or intrigue. Any idea of investing the pageant with a religious significance seemed foreign to the minds of the great majority of the assembled throng.

When the muffled drums were heard announcing that the procession was approaching, and a detachment of troops began to line the street under our windows, I remarked a thrill of excitement, but certainly not of awe, as every head was impatiently turned in the direction from whence the torches and banners of the confraternity of *Passionisti* first came in view. Men of all classes belonged to this *compagnia*, all similarly dressed in loose robes and cowls of grey linen, which concealed the features, a crown of thorns round the head, and a girdle of knotted cords; the difference of rank being discernible only by the whiter feet of some amongst them, and the evident

whom such things seem beautiful in the abstract, I know my account will prove distasteful. But thus it always is: a close insight into the countries where these time-honoured traditional ceremonies are still maintained, strips them of the mysterious charm with which, to a foreigner, they might seem to be invested, and accounts for the levity with which they are witnessed by those familiarized to them since their earliest childhood.

As another instance: there was the custom of blessing the houses on Easter Saturday, which I had heard of long before visiting Italy, and imagined must prove equally edifying and impressive. But when I saw a very dirty priest in his *alb*—I think that is the name—a sort of linen ephod worn over the black gown, attended by a still more dirty little boy carrying holy-water, walking hastily through the house, muttering a few unintelligible words on the threshold of each room, only pausing a little longer in the kitchen to crack a few jokes with the servants, without the least

carried slowly along; the sacred form itself, in the utter prostration of death, stretched upon a bier, coming next in view. A few knelt here, not one in twenty though; the rest all listless, unthinking, or unbelieving.

Some paces behind, upon a sort of platform, appeared a huge image of the Madonna, considerably above the size of life, dressed in violet robes, with long brown ringlets, and pierced through with seven daggers—all the spiritualized beauty with which the “blessed among women” should be invested, lost in the vulgarity of this most material representation. This, with the dignitaries and magistrates of the town walking two and two, closed the procession; after which marched more soldiers, those who had been stationed along the streets falling into the ranks, and the band performing a funeral-march—the same the Austrians always play after the interment of any of their comrades.

I have not exaggerated this description. To some enthusiastic poetic minds, to



send to be blessed, though prompted by no other motive than the pleasure of dressing it up, and of joining in the crowd of idlers before the church.

Generally, however, it would appear as if some vague idea of averting ill-luck, of deprecating some sinister influence, must linger in the hearts of the coachmen and postilions who still adhere to this custom, which is practised by the priests—so Young Italy will tell you—solely to maintain their hold upon the superstitious fears of the lowest ranks of the populace.

But stay—I am wandering from my more immediate subject, although all the church-bells let loose, and ringing their merry peals, proclaim it is noon on Holy Saturday, and that Lent is over! There is something very heart-stirring in this rejoicing: I wish we had the same custom in England to usher in the triumphant glories of the Easter morn. Why it should be anticipated here by twelve hours, and the bells give forth their jubilee, and salvos of artillery be fired at mid-day, instead of midnight, I do

not exactly know : I think I have somewhere read an explanation of this usage, of which I retain no clear remembrance, save that it is of very remote antiquity. Be this as it may, a few hours sooner or later are of little import ; it is the pleasing impression on which I dwell, and it is one of the customs that, even with my hard matter-of-fact notions about the "good old times," I should gladly see revived amongst us.

On Easter Sunday, every one who has scraped the wherewith together, puts on new clothes, and dines on roast lamb ; baskets of stained eggs are sent about as presents, and children feast on cakes embellished with the figure of the Paschal Lamb. In the week following, many marriages take place, as, except under particular circumstances, weddings are never solemnized in Lent.

Dinner parties are also frequently given at this season amongst intimate friends ; more formal ones sometimes on Easter Monday or Tuesday, by the principal families, to some great personage, the

delegate or the bishop, for instance. But throughout all, whether on a social or more ceremonious footing, the same kindly feeling, the same absence of ostentation, invariably prevail. Would that we resembled the Italians in this respect! They literally follow the evangelical precept of asking to their banquets those by whom they cannot be bidden in return. At every dinner-party there are always to be met three or four old gentlemen, friends of the family, neither useful nor ornamental accessories, not distinguished by sprightliness, riches, or good looks. They would be classed as insufferable bores by us, and if asked at all, only grudgingly, to fill up a vacant place; but here, on the contrary, their age and infirmities constitute their title to admission; and unfailingly, whenever a *trattamento* is given—as any gathering for the purpose of making good cheer is denominated—are these old friends seen in their accustomed seats at the table, not the least tinge of patronage being mingled with the cordiality of their reception.

## CHAPTER XII.

Festivals of the Madonna—The Duomo—Legend of San Ciriaco—Miraculous picture—Course of sermons by Padre G—— —General irreligion of the Anconitans—Ecclesiastical tribunal of 1856—The Sacconi.

THE celebration of the festivals of the Madonna, to whom the month of May is especially consecrated, and of San Ciriaco, the patron saint of Ancona, followed quickly upon those I have been just now describing; and a concourse of peasants, daily flocking in, by their bright-looking costumes, and picturesque, handsome appearance, enlivened the town to a very unusual extent.

Indeed, the weather was so lovely, the air so balmy, the atmosphere so gauze-like and softening to the objects it surrounded, that an irresistible charm seemed resting

upon the land; and it became easy to comprehend how a colony of Dorians, establishing themselves upon its shores, crowned its lofty promontory with a temple where Venus was invoked.

A cathedral, dedicated to San Ciriaco, one of the oldest in Europe, now occupies the site of the heathen shrine, nobly situated on the very summit of the hill, overlooking the town, which rises for some distance along its sides, but terminating about half-way, leaves the *duomo* undisturbed in its hoary majesty and impressive solitude. We used to delight in walking up here, and sitting on the steps of the portico, of which the columns were supported on two colossal lions of red granite, gaze forth on the grand prospect which this position displays. At our feet, sloping downwards in a semicircle, lay the town, the mole with Trajan's celebrated arch, the harbour and shipping, commanded by the citadel, and background of mountains stretching far along the curve of the coast, with higher ranges more dimly seen, forming part of the great chain of

the Apennines by which Italy is intersected. Turning away from this, you seem transported to a different region, for on three sides of this bold headland, a broad expanse of waters alone meets the view. The walls of the cathedral are not six paces removed from where the cliff abruptly ends, presenting a rugged face of rock, which towers some two or three hundred feet perpendicularly above the sea. The wild music of the waves, on a stormy day, as they surge against its base, is borne upward by the wind, and, distinguishable amid the strains of the organ and the voices of the choir, produces an effect not easily forgotten. Unfortunately, the existence of this venerable pile is threatened by the inroads of the sea, which slowly, but perceptibly, is undermining the cliff; and in a hundred years, it is calculated, the duomo will be in ruins. The votaries of San Ciriaco say, however, that he will not fail to protect his church, and defy the ravages of the elements.

The body of the saint, clad in his epis-

copal robes, for he was bishop of Ancona, is preserved in a subterranean chapel, and is annually exposed, for the first eight days of the month of May, to the veneration of the people.

The legend runs, that after undergoing in the east the martyrdom of boiling lead being poured down his throat, his remains floated in a stone coffin back to the scene of his former labours.

In the duomo is also kept the famous picture of the Madonna, attested to have opened her eyes in 1795, at a moment of great peril to the State, which was overrun by the armies of the French Republic. Fifty years after, in 1845, this miracle received the confirmation of the papal authority; and the petitions from the *gonfaloniere* (mayor) and magistrates, the clergy and the nobility, imploring that, "as an acknowledgment of being thus privileged, they might be permitted to place Ancona under the immediate protection of the Madonna, who, by opening the eyes of her venerated image, had signally shown her

favour towards it"—received a gracious response. Fireworks, processions, a general illumination, and nine days of religious ceremonies at the duomo, inaugurated this event, which at every succeeding anniversary is still commemorated with great solemnity.

It was my good fortune to hear a course of sermons delivered in honour of the holy image by a Barnabite friar, Padre G—— of Bologna, one of the most celebrated preachers of the day; and the scene presented by the illuminated church, the enthroned picture—a meek and lowly face, shaded by a dark-blue mantle, but resplendent with a star and rose of brilliants, with which it had been adorned by Pius VII.—the eager upturned countenances of the crowd, as their kindling glances wandered from the impassioned orator to the half-closed eyes of the motionless effigy he was apostrophizing—the enthusiastic appeals, the fervent action of the priest as his lofty form towered in the pulpit, and his powerful voice swelled like an organ through the



aisles—all rises vividly before me, resembling some dream of enchantment, with that strange fascination that such pageants in Italy possess.

Not less remarkable than his startling eloquence was the ingenuity with which the preacher diversified nine consecutive days of discourses upon the same topic. One day he surprised his auditors by a dissertation on the invention of gunpowder, the destructive missiles employed in modern warfare, the disastrous sieges and the fearful loss of life, all attributable to this discovery. Then depicting the horrors of two or three well-known bombardments and pillages with thrilling power, he asked triumphantly whence it was that Ancona, often surrounded by hostile armies, and invested by foes as watchful as relentless, had always been preserved from a similar fate? Whence, if not by the miraculous presence of that heavenly portrait, whose modest eyelids had been raised, in moments of the greatest peril to the church, to give courage to the dejected, and faith to the wavering!

On another occasion, he commenced by a vivid description of the early youth, the education, the first exploits of Napoleon. He led you on step by step in his career; he successively brought him before you as the sullen, sensitive boy at Brienne, the aspiring lieutenant of artillery, the young general of twenty-six, making Italy ring with his fame. On he went, gathering fresh ardour, more striking similes, more startling vehemence, as he dwelt on the resistless might which hurled down thrones and swept away kingdoms in a breath, till he brought him, flushed with conquest, to Ancona. "And here," he continued—"here, beneath this venerable dome, standing before the sacred picture, prepared to scoff and ridicule its divine powers—that man, with eagle eyes and folded arms, gives one hurried glance, and trembles. . . . Yes! The haughty brow which the fabled thunders of Jove might have encircled, is bent before that benign though reproachful gaze. His sallow cheek grows ashy pale as those heavenly orbs uncloset upon him! His

limbs totter ; the sacrilegious hand which was stretched forth to lay hold on the venerated image is withdrawn, and he hastens away, sternly forbidding its removal or inspection !”

As a last specimen of this attractive, but certainly peculiar style of pulpit oratory, I ought to quote from a magnificent delineation, with which he opened another of his discourses, of the terror that marks the progress of the Destroying Angel, scattering pestilence from his sable wings, with desolation and mourning in his wake. But my limits forbid anything beyond a mere sketch of the subjects on which he enlarged with a graphic power, a scenic effect—if I may use the term—of which it is impossible to convey any just conception. The dread judgment on the first-born of Egypt, the plagues sent on the murmuring Israelites—the dire records of the dark ages, when cities were made desolate, and whole populations swept away by similar awful visitations—all were detailed with harrowing power. Passing on from these to modern

times, he addressed himself more particularly to the feelings of his auditors, by recalling the ravages which the cholera had made a few years previous in Ancona, when, out of its *then* population of 25,000, 1000 were swept away; and finally bade them ascribe their own preservation—the final disappearance of the scourge—to the wondrous picture having been borne, amid the tears and supplications of the inhabitants, in solemn procession through the streets. “Give me, O Maria!” he here cried with transport, striking himself upon the breast —“give me a spring-tide of roses and hyacinths to weave in garlands for thy shrine; give me the laurel-wreath of genius, the monarch’s crown of gems; give me all that earth holds beautiful or rare, to cast in tribute at thy feet. Give me eloquence to inspire, fervour to excite, persuasion to reclaim—give all to me, who yet am nothing, to be consecrated to thy service. Let me gaze on those celestial eyes which so benignly opened upon Ancona, and gather there undying ardour and unconquerable love, our only hope, our only refuge!”

After an address of this description, an approving murmur used to be discernible among the crowd, while now and then an irrepressible "*bràvo*," or a patronizing "*bene, bene*," would be heard. But, apart from the peasants—who, as I have said, flocked in large numbers to these ceremonies—and the poor old women, whose withered lips and palsied fingers were ever busy in saying their rosary and counting its beads, I should be sorry to have to estimate how much real devotion dwelt in the hearts of the multitude which daily congregated at the duomo.

On the last evening of the Novena, I remember well the utter failure of the Chevalier V——, the \* \* \* Consul, to elicit a spark of devotional enthusiasm. We were all standing on the duomo steps, looking at the fireworks which concluded the solemnity, when a triumph of Anconitan pyrotechnic art disclosed a star, with the initial M. At this the good man, thoroughly honest in his convictions, waved his hat in the air, and shouted to the crowd, "Let us have an *Evviva* for Maria;" but not a man's voice responded. There was a feeble quaver of

cracked trebles, and then silence. He looked sad and mortified, but did not repeat the experiment. He never discussed the subject with us; but I know that he implicitly accepted the authenticity of the miracle. He would have considered it as a sin to permit his mind to wander into any questionings on that to which the Church had set her seal.

But there were few like him in Ancona. I could count on my fingers, without passing those of one hand even, such amongst the *Codino* nobles as entered with any earnestness into the Novena. The dominant feeling with persons who still held belief in their religion, yet whose judgment was not denied its exercise, was profound regret at the whole proceeding; they rightly estimated it as only calculated to spread irreverence and scepticism.

Upon the vast majority of the thinking classes,—the lawyers, the physicians, the young priests (many of whom are materialists), and the merchants,—precisely this result was produced. The official attestation

of the miracle was set down as a clumsy device to rekindle the faith of the peasants and lower orders, and bind them more closely to the Papacy; and religion only reaped contempt and derision for lending herself to such practices.

Other attempts of the Roman See to stimulate decaying zeal in the Marche, have proved equally unsuccessful. As if the Inquisition was not sufficient for the defence of the Faith, with its independent jurisdiction, its dignitaries, familiars, secret lay-members and prisons, special episcopal tribunals were established in 1856 for enforcing the precepts of the Church, and inflicting summary punishment for their contravention. For the detection of swearing and blasphemy, "confraternities of pious persons were instituted" (I quote the words of the edict), "who, dressed in sackcloth and cowl, were authorized to present themselves, either singly or in couples, wherever bad language was most likely to be heard." Ten to thirty days of prison, or of religious exercises in a convent, were to be awarded to

the offender. Also in order to ascertain whether innkeepers and private families observed the canonical law with respect to the days of fasting and abstinence, these *Sacconi*, as they were termed, were directed to search the premises. Very inquisitorially indeed did they exercise this faculty. I have heard of these agreeable apparitions taking off the lids of saucepans on the fire to see if they contained meat. Depositions from other quarters were also received; and as it was specially provided that the names of informers and witnesses should be kept secret, and as they had the half of the mulct imposed, a boundless field was open to domestic spying and treachery of the basest description.

I once saw a man tied to a church door with a gag in his mouth. On his breast was an inscription, signifying that he was thus punished for having spoken sacrilegiously of the Madonna; but so little were the bystanders impressed, that it was not judged advisable to familiarize them with such spectacles.



## CHAPTER XIII.

Political condition of Ancona—Arrogance of the Austrian General—Strictness of the martial law—A man shot on the denunciation of his wife—Application of the stick—Republican excesses—Proneness to assassination—*Infernal Association* in 1849.

EXCEPT passingly I have not yet touched upon the political condition of Ancona. This town, ever since June, 1849, had been occupied by a large Austrian force, holding it in the Pope's name, and ostensibly for the maintenance of his authority.

Never was a garrison more overbearing, or less popular. Even the most uncompromising among the *Codini*,—attached by their own interests as well as hereditary sympathies to the absolute party,—even they were sometimes startled by the measures pursued, and could not conceal

their disapprobation. Although aware that they stood indebted to the Austrians for the maintenance of things in their accustomed train, they seemed, notwithstanding, to fret under their yoke; and held back from any intercourse beyond what absolute necessity demanded. As for the population in general, they kept determinedly aloof; its long continuance had evidently not reconciled them to military rule, and the line of separation continued unbroken. The caffè the officers frequented was still deserted by the natives, and any house, even of foreign residents, where Austrians were received, was sedulously avoided.

Thus repulsed alike by friend and foe, the feelings of the Austrians were naturally not of the most amicable description; but they were particularly bitter against the supporters of the Government, who, owing all to them, were so backward in displaying their adherence; and whenever brought into contact with the municipality, or other authorities, the General lost no opportunity of manifesting his profound disgust.

In all their dealings with this stern old potentate, the papal agents reminded me of Frankenstein and his monster ; they cowered before the presence it had been their desire and effort to call forth, and the consciousness of the servile timidity with which he was regarded, served to render him doubly imperious and exacting. One day, having encountered some delay in complying with his demand for a large and immediate supply of fuel for his troops, he sent for two members of the town-council, and swore that if within two hours time the wood was not forthcoming, he would have the whole *municipio* shot without mercy.

To hear this affront dolorously recounted by some of the worshipful corporation, accompanied by the pantomime and varied intonations with which an Italian dramatizes any recital, was inexpressibly amusing to those who, like us, had no personal interest in the question ; while others again were not displeased at the humiliation inflicted on the Pope's functionaries by his trusty allies. But this was not the first in-

stance of vehemence shown by General \* \* Some months previous, he had subjected one of the leading nobles to the indignity of being marched through the streets, surrounded by soldiers, on the charge of having forcibly opposed an officer's being quartered in his house. The real state of the case was simply that, on returning home from a journey, the prince found installed in his own private apartments a stranger, whose peremptory refusal to exchange them for another suite of rooms in the same palazzo, caused high words to ensue, which ended in the young proprietor's summary arrest, and the uncontrollable indignation of the General. Twenty-four hours were given the prisoner to choose between immediate execution or a formal apology to the officer—unpleasant alternatives both, but of which it is needless to say the latter was accepted.

An incident of a darker nature occurred soon after, which cast a gloom over every heart, and made one remember that more than mere threats and passing alarms are connected with martial law and its inexor-

able rigour. The prohibition against possessing or secreting any species of weapon, necessarily issued by the Austrians on first entering the country, was still in activity, and the penalty for transgressing it was death. It entered into the heart of a reckless, abandoned woman, the wife of a poor, honest, elderly artisan, to have recourse to this enactment to rid herself of her husband, and make way for a younger and more attractive suitor. Unknown to him, she had in her possession a sword belonging to his son by a former marriage, a youth who had served in the Guardia Civica, but was then absent from Ancona; and one day, after some angry words had passed between them, she thrust the weapon into a mattress, hurried to the main guard, and denounced her husband as having concealed arms in his house. A party of soldiers at once repaired to the spot, a search was instituted, the fatal sword soon discovered, and the miserable man, frantically protesting his innocence, was carried off to confinement. His known good conduct, his harmless demean-

nour, availed him nothing; and the next morning, the terror-stricken captive, almost senseless, and so strongly convulsed that he was obliged to be propped up to receive the soldiers' fire, was shot in the court-yard of the prison—the accusation of his guilty wife having been considered sufficient to convict him. I have heard that the woman went mad from remorse; but this sounds too like the retributive winding-up of a tragedy to be implicitly believed. Such, however, was currently reported to be the close of a tale of horror, which, frightful as it appears, has had but too many counterparts wherever the Austrians have held sway.

Almost more terrible than death to the keen sensibility of the south was the infliction of the stick, applied for minor infractions of martial law. A blow to an Italian is the deepest degradation. He is taught to regard it as such from his earliest childhood. The school-boys are never flogged or caned; even home discipline never goes beyond a mild *schiaffo*, *i. e.* a slap on the face. For a man, a gentleman, to be sub-

jected to corporal punishment, was an outrage never to be forgotten. Two young men of good family underwent this cruel indignity in Ancona. A few ounces of powder and shot, and *a broken bayonet*, were found in their lodgings. The latter belonged to a musket which its owner, who was in the Guardia Civica, gave up at the general disarmament; as it was broken, he had inadvertently kept it back, little dreaming of the consequences. The other culprit protested he fancied the ammunition was innocuous so long as he had no fire-arms. But these reasons availed nothing. They were conveyed under a guard to the citadel, and there underwent their sentence. Out of very shame, their friends kept what had occurred as secret as possible, and I believe they left the country. But the anguish, the bitterness, the hatred which this incident aroused, are indescribable.

Still one must be just. Insolent, tyrannical as are the Austrians, crushing everything beneath the iron heel of military despotism, it would be gross partisanship

to pass over in silence the anarchy and bloodshed which preceded their occupation of Ancona, on which they founded the justification of their severities.

The people of the *Marche* have always been noted for their propensity for assassination—an imputation which, far from denying, I have often heard the lower orders excuse, with the remark that, since there was no other way in the Papal States for *the poor* to obtain redress, it became a necessity to take the law into their own hands.

Before the accession of Pius IX. these acts of *vendetta* (their perpetrators would have scouted their being termed murders) were astonishingly frequent, while, through the indolence or connivance of the police, they commonly escaped detection. During the first golden period of the new pontificate, however, in the universal concord which prevailed, the stiletto seemed rusting in its sheath; but ere long, amid the disturbances and ferment brought upon Italy by the spread of democracy, these



evil tendencies revived in Ancona with tenfold vigour.

Political animosity was now brought into play, and suffered to give a colour to the most lawless excesses. A band of twenty or thirty of the lowest dregs of the populace formed a league for the extirpation of the enemies of freedom. Self-styled the Infernal Association, they met every night to decree what lives were to be offered up to the public good, and then became themselves the executioners of the doom they had pronounced. It was in January, 1849, that the existence of this self-instituted tribunal was first whispered about the town, and that three or four assassinations every week attested its reality; from which time its members went on increasing in audacity and thirst for blood till the month of April, when the strong remonstrances of the foreign consuls compelled the Government to employ adequate means for its suppression.

It is the greatest blot on the reputation of Mazzini, who, as chief Triumvir, held

power during that eventful winter which succeeded the Pope's flight to Gaeta, that he did not instantly use prompt and vigorous measures for the punishment of these wretches. He did not, as was asserted by the Austrians, organize the Infernal Association—it was already in being when the Roman Republic was proclaimed, and the materials of which it was formed had their origin in long-gone-by years of corruption, national debasement, and misrule. But he suffered it to exist, fancying that by striking terror into the supporters of the Papacy, the Republic would be strengthened; a most miserable adaptation of the miserable maxim that means are justified by the end.

A word in disapprobation of the existing authorities, or of regret for the Pope, was laid hold of by the assassins as a pretext for their awards. At last, emboldened alike by their immunity from all judicial control, and the palsy of fear which had fallen upon the inhabitants, they ceased to wait for the shades of night to perpetrate their crimes,

and stabbed or shot at their victims in broad daylight. These men were all well-known by sight and by name (one amongst them, by the bye, was of English parentage, but had been educated by the Jesuits at Loretto), and used to stand in groups on the Piazza, laying down the law on all the political intelligence of the day, and causing the passers-by to tremble at their frown. The relations of those they had murdered were forbidden to wear mourning; and a gentleman who, a few days after the assassination of his brother, appeared abroad with a crape-band round his hat, was threatened with a similar fate unless it was instantly removed.

A diary kept by one of my cousins, a girl of fifteen, during this time, is really a curious document, being full of entries like the following:—"18th March. We are now in the midst of anxiety and confusion; one or two assassinations occur every night. 30th.—Sad news has come! The Piedmontese have been defeated at Novara by the Austrians. This so enraged the assas-

sins that they went about seizing all the papers which had brought the intelligence; and murdered the Marchese Nembrini at the Casino because he ventured to expostulate with them. Four other people were stabbed last night. 3rd April.—Seven people stabbed, three of whom died immediately; their bodies remained out in a pouring rain all night.”

And so on: but not to multiply horrors, and yet give a really faithful portraiture of this extraordinary state of things, I will simply transcribe *verbatim* a conversation I held one evening with a lively young Roman, whom family affairs occasionally brought to Ancona. It was at a somewhat ponderous *accademia*, or concert, held at one of the most precise and old-fashioned houses, where the women sat immovably round the room, and the men crowded helplessly together in the centre, that he contrived to get behind my chair, and startled me by saying—

“Do you know we are in the company of five *assassinati*?”

"*Assassinati!*" I repeated, in astonishment.

"Oh, you do not understand," he rejoined, laughing. "I did not mean assassinated outright; but merely those whose lives have been attempted. Look at that shrivelled yellow man, with a face like a vulture, and an eye like a stone, the Marchese.

"Well, his share came before our political movement. About ten years ago, towards dusk, he was standing in the street, on the very threshold of his house—next door to where your uncle lives—when he was stabbed; the assassin ran away. It was believed to have been an act of private vengeance; and being pretty well deserved, nobody troubled himself much about it. A similar motive, also, is supposed to have been the cause of my good friend, Count F——, being waylaid, as he was returning from the theatre, about a twelvemonth after, and very severely wounded—in fact, he was at first given over. Then there is that tall, white-haired man, the Cavaliere

V——. Well, he was both stabbed and shot at, poor *diavolo*, during the Reign of Terror here, as he was taking a walk about three in the afternoon. The wounds he received were very serious; and in addition, the shock to his system was so great, that brain-fever came on. He was known to be a *Codino*—that was his only crime; but the hatred of the *rossi*\* against him ran so high, that during his illness they used to come and shout, “Death to V——! Death to V——!” under the very windows of his sick-room; and threatened the doctors who attended him with their vengeance if he recovered. Poor creature, his hair became blanched as you see it now from terror!”

The gay manner with which he commenced his narration had now quite subsided, and he looked distressed at witnessing the mingled horror and incredulity my face depicted.

“You scarcely can believe all this,” he said; “and then, if you are once penetrated

\* Rossi is an abbreviation of *Repubblicani rossi*—red republicans.

with its truth, you will never be able to understand how any of us can yet hope for improvement in a people that so miserably abused their first dawn of freedom. All you English reason in this way now. But I must finish the account of the personages on our canvas. There stands the young Marchese D——; he was greeted with two bullets whizzing past his ears about the same period, as he was returning from a stroll in the public gardens—their Pincian Hill, their Villa Borghese here!” he added, contemptuously. “Ah, then, to make up the fifth; there is that little talkative man, who is conversing with the *cavaliere* whose misfortunes I have already narrated. He was stabbed, or shot at, or something of the sort, in our late troubles; and, *per Bacco!* it is a pity they did not make an end of him, for retrograde as he was before, he has become thoroughly Austrian since!”

At this moment, my companion fancied he could detect some scrutinizing glances cast upon him, and carelessly changing the low, earnest tone in which he had been

speaking, to one of sportive badinage, said something very trifling and ludicrous, which, for a few moments, apparently gave a completely new current to our conversation. Then, as soon as he thought himself no longer observed, he resumed, "I am not half cautious enough, even with only these poor *Rococos*\* to deal with, deaf and purblind as most of them are. Yet, one never can tell who is listening; and the very walls have ears, I think, sometimes. Amongst Codini, I endeavour never to mention the word politics and all its concomitant delights."

I told him we had noticed this reserve in others besides himself; and that it was only at my uncle's house that one ever heard anything like the true expression of their feelings.

"Yes," he said; "it is a compliment we pay you. We can trust strangers—not ourselves! What a miserable people we are! In this late revolution of ours, what

\* Meaning literally a piece of antique furniture.



opportunities have been lost—what errors committed—what fatuity and treachery displayed! How difficult will it be for future historians to unravel the tangled web of all the events of those memorable three years—from the accession of Pio Nono in '46, to the sieges of Bologna and Ancona, the capitulation of Rome, and the re-establishment of Papal authority. For instance, take as a detached episode the scenes enacted in this good city of Ancona, and you will tell me that a people who could commit such crimes on the one hand, or suffer them to be committed on the other, deserve no better fate than their present servitude. *Basta!* You have doubtless heard your cousins speak often enough on this subject?"

"Sufficiently so to make me wonder how they lived through such horrible anxiety."

"Oh, they grew used to it, poor things!" he rejoined; "and they tried to keep up their courage for their father's sake, whose affairs did not admit of his leaving, and they would not go away without him. I remember being at the house one evening,

when we heard screams in the street; we all ran to the window, and there was the servant of the Count —, wringing his hands, and calling for help, over the prostrate body of his master, whose yells of agony mingled with the attendant's cries. Another time, one of them, walking with your uncle in broad daylight, saw a poor Irish friar shot dead at a few paces distance. Ask them, too, if they remember that Easter Sunday, when, a little after dusk, they were startled by the report of fire-arms; and on sending to investigate the cause, their emissary returned, pale with horror, to say that he had stumbled over two dead bodies yet warm, lying before the Exchange, in the principal street of the town."

"And all this time the local authorities never interfered?"

"Interfered! They were utterly powerless. Whether the assassins had a secret understanding with the Governor, or *Preside*, a certain Mattioli, a creature of Mazzini's, has never been ascertained. All I can vouch for is, that people repairing to him to

implore justice on the murderers of their relations, found those murderers familiarly surrounding him in his audience chamber. The utmost lengths of severity he went to was one day to harangue his friends from the balcony of the Palazzo del Governo, and say, *Figliuoli, state buoni*; and another time to publish a manifesto, in which he deplored that 'the streets of Ancona were too often stained with the blood of citizens,' and begged them to 'place bounds to their patriotic ardour.' "

"But he put them down at last with a strong hand?"

"Not he! The order came from Rome; that respected demagogue had nothing to do with it. Towards the end of April, two envoys arrived from the Triumvirate, aroused at last to the magnitude of the evil, with private instructions to the *preside* to put an end to this overflowing patriotism in the most summary manner possible. The greatest caution was observed; the officers of the Guardia Civica, on whom the most reliance could be placed, were summoned

and sworn to secrecy ; then instructed as to what had been decided on. In the dead of the night, the tocsin sounded, the drums beat the *générale*, and different detachments of the *civica* marching to the haunts of the assassins, captured some twenty-five of them before they were well awake. Oh, there was such joy all over the town the next morning."

"I can well imagine that," said I ; "but not how a population of thirty thousand people endured this bondage for three months without an effort at deliverance."

"As for that," he said, "I think, signorina, there are more wonderful examples in history of submission than even this affords. What is all I have been telling you to France under Robespierre?"

"And the siege—when did that begin?" I inquired.

"The siege," he said—"let me see. It was in May—on the 24th of May—that the Austrians came in sight of the town, and summoned it to surrender. It was a mad idea that of holding out against them ; still,

I am glad it was attempted, and kept up; too, for twenty-eight days. Your cousins were safe, and away at that time, or I think even their English courage would have been sorely tried. And how the shells used to come hissing through the air, and then fall crashing down, as if the very skies were riven! . . . In due succession came the capitulation, and the entrance of the enemy, and the fall of Rome: and now behold us! Austrians here; French there; a despised and vindictive Government; a sullen people; an exhausted treasury; and foreign troops. We are in bad way, signorina," he continued, as he rose to take his departure; "and were it not for Piedmont and the *Rè galantuomo*, it would be useless to think of better times. A constitution, such as we see in that noble State, is the just medium between the ravings of the Mazzinians and the drivellings of the Codini. As long as we remain in the hands of the Pope, we shall never be more than a nation of buffoons, opera-dancers, singers, fiddlers, priests, and slaves!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

Execution of a criminal—Sympathy for his fate—The Ghetto—Hardships of the Jews—The case of the Mortara child not without precedent—Story of the merchant and his niece.

AN event of no small importance in public estimation, which took place during my stay in Ancona, the execution of a culprit condemned according to the civil legislature, gave an insight into many curious features of the national character. The criminal, who was a porter employed in landing goods from vessels in the harbour, murdered his master, a Jewish merchant, in revenge for having been discharged from his employment, on account of his idle and insolent habits: watching his opportunity, he came behind him at dusk, as he was walking in a very narrow lane, and plunged a dagger into

his heart. Contrary to what occurs in nine cases out of ten in this country, the assassin was captured, and, stranger still, convicted, after having been in prison only six or seven months. Usually two or three years elapse between the commission of the offence and the punishment awarded to it, so that all recollection of the crime is well-nigh lost, and the predominant feeling becomes one of sympathy for the prisoner.

The whole town was in commotion for two or three days preceding the execution, and numerous were the inquiries as to the state of the convict—whether he was sanguine in his hopes of a reprieve, whether his health had suffered from imprisonment, and so forth; topics that divided public attention with the expected arrival of the *boja*, the dreaded functionary of the law, who was brought into the town in a close carriage escorted by gendarmes—precautions always required to protect him from the fury of the populace. Every one was interested: the men pitied the criminal, the women prayed for him; while the Jewish residents, fearful

of incurring general odium, kept much within the Ghetto, the quarter of the town especially assigned to them; moreover, a deputation of some of their most influential members had gone up to Rome to ask pardon for the murderer, so great was their apprehension of the vengeance that might be visited upon the whole community if the execution took place. But the offence had been too flagrant to be passed over, the opportunity was also advantageous for a display of justice and impartiality, and the Government held to their previous decision.

The prisoner meantime was kept in uncertainty of his fate, until the night before the day fixed upon for execution, when the officials, entering his cell, informed him that his appeal for mercy had been rejected, and bade him prepare for death the following morning. According to long-established custom, he was allowed the singular boon of selecting whatever he most fancied for his supper; no rarity was denied him; and I remember hearing it announced that he had chosen some particular kind of fish held



in great esteem, which was with difficulty procured. This meal over, a confraternity called the *Compagnia della Buona Morte*—literally of the Good Death—comprising some of the old nobles, merchants, and tradesmen—a relic of the countless religious associations of the Middle Ages, still held together by a bond more of custom and kindly feeling than of faith—entered upon their office of ministering to the last hours of the condemned. Some remained with him all night, accompanying him to the prison-chapel, where the appropriate services were performed; and the others, dispersed about the town, went from house to house collecting money to be applied in masses for his soul. They did not proffer a word, but stood like spectres at the door, completely enshrouded in their black robes and peaked cowls, and rattling the box in which the alms were to be deposited, whereon a death's-head and cross-bones were rudely painted. It was one of those successful appeals to their senses, more especially to their terror of aught connected with death, to which

these people are so peculiarly sensitive ; and none, I verily believe, not even of the most determined *increduli*, but turned pale, and hastened to make his offering. The very existence of such a brotherhood, in the midst of so much unbelief, is a paradox, and is one of those inconsistencies which meet one at every step in attempting any analysis of the Italian character. As soon as day broke, many women repaired to the churches to hear the first mass, with the intention, as it is termed, of rendering it available to the soul of the departing sinner—some remaining upon their knees until they knew he was no more.

The good offices of the Buona Morte extended to the last ; they accompanied the criminal to the scaffold, besides a long train of priests and friars, and then followed his remains to the place of interment. As may be supposed, crowds of the populace flocked to the execution ; but from the common report, it would appear that far less of that revolting ribaldry and indifference was displayed than has been so loudly protested

against as stigmatizing the English under similar circumstances. As a means of enforcing the moral lesson, many fathers took their children to the spot; and when all was over, and the guillotine had done its ghastly office, beat them severely, to impress upon them the fatal consequences of crime; yet, in spite of this discipline, it seemed too probable that the unbounded interest manifested for the departed, the praises lavished upon his penitence, and upon his courage in encountering death, must completely have done away with any salutary reflections the terrible spectacle had produced.

“Well, he died like an angel!” said one lady to us. “He was so obedient to his confessor, that he took a cup of coffee at his request just before leaving the prison, although he had previously declined any refreshment.”

“Yes,” said another; “and he confessed everything, and seemed so resigned! Certainly he had an edifying end!”

“He must have been a good man at heart,” remarked a third; “it was a pity almost to

sacrifice him under the circumstances. There was great moderation, too, amongst the people; for they all felt *that*. Many have thought it hard a Christian's life should suffer for having caused the death of a Jew!"

A singular idea this, to the English untraveller at least; but if he will accompany me into the Ghetto of Ancona, and take a glance at the condition of the inhabitants, he will find greater cause for surprise at discovering, in the middle of the nineteenth century, so many of the remains of the oppression and tyranny under which the Hebrew race once universally groaned. The Jewish community in Ancona comprehends upwards of 3000 persons—a large proportion where the entire population does not exceed 30,000—and these are by law restricted to a small and densely-crowded part of the town, in which the streets are so narrow that two people literally cannot walk abreast; and the marvel is how the process of construction could ever have been carried on, or such massive buildings erected, in such extraordinary proximity. The want of

cleanliness, of light, of air, in this miserable region, is indescribable; yet great as are these evils, they seem mere trifles in comparison with the contempt and vexatious enactments and privations by which its occupants are perpetually harassed.

They cannot carry out their dead for interment in the wild desolate burying-ground beyond the gates by day, as they would inevitably be exposed to the taunts and hisses of the populace, who have been known to throw stones at the coffin as it passed: it is under favour of the dusk alone that the Hebrews venture forth to consign their departed brethren to the grave. They cannot go from one town of the State to another without a permission from the Inquisition, in addition to the usual police formalities, common to their Christian fellow-subjects. Their lives are embittered by perpetual fear and distrust. The incident of the secret baptism of the Mortara child by a Christian maid-servant, and his seizure by the ecclesiastical authorities, which has made such noise throughout Europe, is by no means

the first of a similar description. But some years ago there was no free press in Piedmont to bring such facts to light, and hold them up to public condemnation. The story which I shall briefly relate, and for the perfect truth of which I can vouch, seems to me even sadder than that of Edgar Mortara.

About twenty years since, a Jewish merchant and his wife, being childless, adopted a niece, who grew up beautiful, affectionate, and the delight of their old age. Like many other children of the community, she had been sent in her infancy to be nursed by a peasant-woman in the country, whose extreme poverty alone induced her to stoop to what is considered the degradation of rearing a Jewish child. This woman dying when the girl was about eighteen, divulged to the priest who attended her death-bed, that she had baptized her nursing, then an infant of only a few months old; but had ever since kept the secret shut up in her own heart, where it gnawed and preyed upon her. The confessor applauded her for

her zeal, declaring that by her instrumentality a soul was rescued from perdition ; and scarcely had she breathed her last, when he hastened to the Inquisition in Ancona, and announced the discovery he had made.

Without a moment's delay, a body of Dominican monks, the implacable enemies of the Jews, accompanied by the requisite officials of the police, repaired to the merchant's house, and peremptorily demanded that his niece, as a Christian convert, baptized in infancy by her nurse, should be given up to them. The most frantic remonstrances proved unavailing ; she was torn from her adopted parents, and placed in a convent, as well for the purpose of religious instruction, as to secure her from all intercourse with her family.

Meantime, the poor uncle took the most energetic measures for her liberation, and secretly wrote, exhorting her to hold firm, with the promise of 10,000 dollars for her dowry, if she succeeded in returning to him. The letter was intercepted, and fell into the hands of the priests, who did not, however,

bring it forward until their plans were matured. He was kept for some months in suspense, being in total ignorance of his niece's proceedings, and denied all correspondence with her; when it was at length intimated to him that she had readily imbibed the tenets of her religion, was happy at her miraculous deliverance, and willing to receive a husband at the hands of her spiritual directors: in furtherance of which desirable end, the sum of money he had proffered in the event of her restoration to him, was now claimed as her marriage-portion. Inexpressibly mortified and indignant, he yet had no alternative but to submit, and the dowry was made over to the ecclesiastical authorities.

From the day on which she had been borne shrieking from their home, the merchant and his wife never again set eyes upon their child, never learned whether old affections yet stirred within her, and never knew whether she ever became really satisfied with her lot. The youth to whom she



had been united was an obscure *impiegato* in some little town of the interior, where, I believe, she still resides. The aunt, quite heart-broken, quitted the scene of so many agonizing recollections, and removed to Tuscany, where greater religious liberty was at that time enjoyed; while the old man divided his time between his wife and Florence and his business in Ancona, to which he still clung with characteristic eagerness: but the charm of life was gone, and he moved about his accustomed haunts a changed and sorrow-stricken man.

With the possibility of a similar fate awaiting their children;—continually threatened with the revival of certain old laws which treated Jews as the very pariahs of society, and which were actually repromulgated seven or eight years ago, although the energetic proceedings of the Rothschilds, who held the needy Roman government in their grasp, caused them to be suddenly withdrawn;—excluded from all social intercourse with the Christian population;—looked down upon even by the lowest, who

consider they lose caste by acting as their servants,—it seems wonderful to find this persecuted race holding merry-makings in the Ghetto, and seemingly indifferent to their degraded position.

## CHAPTER XV.

A wedding in the Ghetto—Contrast between the state of the Christian and Hebrew population—Arrival of the post—Highway robberies—Exploits of Passatore.

A GREAT wedding taking place during my residence in the town, in the family of one of the wealthiest Jews, my uncle, who was well known to him in the course of their commercial transactions, was invited to the ceremony, and earnestly requested to bring his *signorine* to witness it. As it was the only opportunity ever likely to be given us of seeing the interior of one of their houses, or of forming the least idea of the manners of the Jews, we were delighted to accept the invitation, and on the appointed day repaired to the dismal Ghetto.

The house was situated in the principal street, which was about five feet in breadth,

wider far than any of the rest, and considered quite an enviable locality : it was lined with very ordinary shops, presided over by frightful old women, who darted out upon us from their dens, clamorously inviting us to purchase ; and screeched and chattered in a manner which, used as we were to Italian loquacity, was yet well-nigh overpowering. The staircase was dark, very dirty, and very steep ; for here the wealthiest people live on the highest floor, to enjoy more light and air ; and it was not until we had climbed at least 120 steps that we reached our destination.

Two or three stout elderly ladies, all with strongly-marked Hebrew physiognomies, came out to receive us, and led the way to a saloon hung with green silk, and lighted with chandeliers, although the sun was shining : here we were introduced to about a dozen portly matrons, who, besides an unlimited amount of courtesies and compliments, kissed us on both cheeks—a salutation I could willingly have dispensed with. They all wore rich silk dresses, made high

up to the throat, and magnificent diamond earrings and brooches, which, indeed, were almost the only indications of their reputed wealth that met the eye ; but I have been told they are fearful of making any display of their riches, lest it should subject them to fresh extortions. The tone of their manners was decidedly vulgar, and it was impossible not to be struck with their mode of speaking Italian—their native language of course—but accompanied with a peculiar nasal intonation that was extremely disagreeable.

The bride, a very pretty girl, dressed in a light blue and white silk, with a veil and orange-blossoms, was seated on a sort of throne at the upper end of the room, surmounted by a canopy of white silk ; and, as a peculiar mark of distinction, chairs were placed for us next to her. Besides ourselves, no unmarried women were present ; for all the young Jewesses were kept apart, and not admitted till the conclusion of the ceremony, when they came rushing in, and saluted the bride and bridegroom in a tumultuous manner.

As for the religious rites, which commenced soon after our arrival, or rather the concluding portion, which we witnessed, for the prayers and chants had been carried on at intervals since the preceding day, I shall not attempt to describe them; for, being common alike to the whole Hebrew race, wherever settled, they cannot with propriety enter into a picture of Italian life. All the ceremonies observed on this occasion were according to ancient Jewish customs, we were told by the bride herself, who was occasionally handed down to the centre of the room, where stood the rabbi, the bridegroom, and the male relations of the parties, all wearing their hats, and black-silk horns fastened on their foreheads. Once the young pair drank wine jointly from one cup, which was immediately dashed into a brazen vessel; and at another time they stood together beneath a scarf which was held above their heads; but when not immediately taking part in what was going forward, the sposa looked on unconcerned, neither very timid, nor anxious, nor devout,

and with about as much reflection on the duties of married life, I should imagine, as any of her Christian countrywomen in the like position. As for the women who stood round, they did not join in any of the prayers, but were evidently mere spectators, and thought the length of the service rather tedious, whispering to us over and over again that it was *all' uso antico*, to please the bridegroom's father, and was almost as new to them as to ourselves.

At last, after the wedding-ring had been put on—being previously tested as to the purity of the gold by a jeweller who was in attendance—a little more chanting seemed to conclude the ceremony, for there was a general move, and the bride said, "*Tutto è finito per me*—My part in it is over; the others," pointing to the rabbi, and some of the old men, "have yet a few more prayers to say, but I have nothing to do with them;" then descending from her throne, she received the kisses and congratulations of all present, augmented by the onslaught of the liberated damsels, who seemed to

think her the most enviable of human beings.

The whole company were then conducted for refreshment into an adjoining saloon, not illuminated like the first, where lemonade and sugar-plums were handed round, and sonnets in honour of the newly-wedded pair distributed to every guest. These poetic effusions, which are of about the same merit as the mottoes encircling bonbons at our supper-tables, seem in Ancona to be considered indispensable to every wedding; and printed copies, embellished with little emblematic wood-cuts, of a very low order of art, are profusely showered about. The poor Jews, however, were not allowed the latter privilege—they might have their sonnets if they so chose, but not printed ones; so they were fain to content themselves with elaborate specimens of calligraphy, on which the best scribes in the town had been displaying their ingenuity. The apartment in which we were assembled was very lofty and spacious, with six large windows, through which the sun found its



way cheerily enough, and a domed ceiling, painted, as well as the walls, in fresco, with scenes from the Old Testament, embellished with a profusion of gilding and handsome chandeliers; but as a contrast to all this magnificence, the floor was of brick, and the furniture merely benches, while dust and dirt met the eye in every direction. Some of the family accounted for this apparent inconsistency, by telling us they were not rich enough to fit it up in a style analogous to the decorations; but the real motive we ascribed to a fear of drawing too much attention to their means of expenditure. This, however, had nothing to do with the absence of brooms and scouring-pails, so curiously apparent, which confirmed the charge the Anconitans triumphantly brought forward against their Hebrew neighbours, of want of cleanliness; and certainly, if aught could surpass their own shortcomings on that score, things must have been in a woful condition!

Before we went away, they insisted on showing us the house, which contained

nothing further worthy of remark, except the presents for the bride, spread out upon a long table, and seeming to consist principally of innumerable loaves of sugar and bundles of wax candles, tied together with gay-coloured ribbons. There were also one or two large cakes, stuck all over with pins and brooches, none, however, of any great value. The bedrooms were scantily furnished, without any attempt at comfort or elegance, and miserably dark, for they looked into a side-street, where the opposite houses appeared crushing in upon us, communicating a horrible sense of suffocation, and bringing to my mind the German legend of the prisoner who was gradually stifled in a dungeon that daily narrowed itself round him.

I was so tormented with this notion, that it was quite a relief when our visit came to a conclusion; and emerging from the mazes of the Ghetto, we found ourselves on the Piazza del Teatro, which looked quite spacious and animated in comparison. A stream of *vetture*, carts, porters carrying

merchandize, soldiers, priests, and all the motley population of an Italian town, were constantly passing and repassing through this square, furnishing food for amusing observation to the gioventù, who usually sunned themselves on benches outside the caffè, or, on those rare occasions when it rained, sought refuge in an opposite cigar shop—quite an aristocratic resort—where, swinging upon the counter, or leaning against the door, they gazed complacently at all that was going on, and discussed the news and scandal of the day. Without a future to look forward to, without a present—unless this miserable frittering away of existence day after day, and year after year, can be so called—they yet seem in that genial sunshine, beneath that bright blue sky, to forget their poverty, the gloom of their political condition, and the degradation of their country. Perhaps the Government has a deep motive in so grievously oppressing its Hebrew subjects; for the others, in considering the fate of these Helots of the land, may think themselves

comparatively well off, and sit down contented with their lot.

As the hour draws near for the arrival of the post, a little more stir is perceptible; and when, only a few hours behind its time, a lumbering diligence containing the mail-bags makes its appearance, a crowd follows to the office, and impatiently awaits the distribution of the letters. Those persons who are expecting friends are here also, of course, drawn up in readiness to receive them, and you see the most affectionate greetings interchanged between tall black-bearded men, who loudly kiss each other on both cheeks, and pour forth their expressions of delight at meeting, with a volubility no Englishman could ever attain. It is a pleasant feature in their character—not the kissing, but the kindness with which they always go forth to welcome a friend's arrival, or speed him on his travels. An Italian would think it hard, indeed, to return from an absence of even a few days without finding somebody awaiting him; and as to his departure, a perfect train

always attends the adventurous traveller who sets out on an expedition to Rome or Florence, quite as much sensation being excited as there would be amongst us were he going for an indefinite period to the Arctic regions. .

The perils of the road may, however, be brought forward to account for the importance attached to any feat of locomotion, and the congratulations attending the wanderer's safe return; for it is by no means uncommon for the passengers to announce, as they emerge from the diligence into the arms of their rejoicing friends, that they were waylaid and robbed somewhere near Bologna, or else between Forli and Rimini, that very unpromising region I passed through on my journey from Florence to Ancona. These events were of too frequent occurrence to excite much attention; still, any interesting particulars concerning them never failed to find their way into every circle, and we used to hear the details either at the houses of our acquaintances, or else when they came to *fare un whist* (play a

rubber) at my uncle's, and were initiated into the mysteries of the game which he had introduced that winter among them. To obtain an insight into this new pursuit, supposed exclusively a British pastime, the greatest ardour was displayed; many of the società took to studying the *Vade Mecum*—a little pocket-guide to whist—with laudable perseverance, carrying it always about with them, and questioning each other concerning the progress they had made; while the zest with which they assembled to put in practice the theory so diligently acquired, materially assisted in dispelling the monotony of Lent.

These little assemblies were very lively and sociable. Tea was drunk by the very conscientious without milk, while they heroically abstained from *ploomkek*; and after the customary bows and complimentary phrases, the conversation became very animated. Anecdotes of robberies were of course rife on such occasions. “By the bye, marchese,” said a card-player one evening, “this reminds me of that story of the man

who singly robbed thirteen people: do you remember it?"

"*E come!*" was the reply; "it did not happen so many years ago, and was, besides, the drollest thing I ever heard of. He hung up a number of hats and cloaks among the bushes on the wayside, with poles projecting, which in the dim uncertain twilight looked like men drawn up with guns presented. He then fastened a cord right across the road, and awaited the diligence, the horses of which encountering this obstacle, were of course thrown down, and all was terror and confusion. At this moment, our friend rushed forward, shouting, as if to his followers, '*Attenti, figliuoli!*' but do not fire till I give the word!' and demanded their purses and watches from the passengers, threatening them with an instantaneous volley if they did not at once comply. They were all so completely taken by surprise, and so glad, moreover, to be let off thus easily, that they obeyed without a moment's hesitation, and the contents of their pockets were quickly handed to the

captain of that formidable band, who, in return, raised the struggling horses, and dismissed them amicably on their way, rejoicing at their escape from rougher usage. Ah, he was a genius, that man! He had the makings of a Napoleon! It was a pity he was taken and hanged, for he had committed no murder, and, according to law, his punishment should have been imprisonment; but an exception was made in his case—the Government was so angry at his stratagem.”

“Well, that is an amusing story,” said the little contessa. “I had quite forgotten it, so that it is as new to me as to the ‘Signorina forestiera,’” smiling at me, whose spirit of inquiry always excited her amazement. “At any rate, he was a harmless sort of creature, this hero of yours, caro marchese, not like that dreadful Passatore who ravaged all Romagna lately.”

This led to an account of many of the feats of this freebooter and his band, who for nearly two years had infested the country, and rendered property and travelling



very insecure. His most celebrated exploit was taking possession of the theatre at Forlimpopoli, a small town a few miles to the south of Forli, on the high-road to Cesena.

It was an evening in the Carnival of 1851. The spectators were assembled, the orchestra had tuned their instruments, and the curtain drew up. Instead of the usual performers, the stage was occupied by Passatore and his followers, armed to the teeth. He was as polite, however, as circumstances permitted; and addressing the terrified audience, begged them not to be alarmed, nor to be so rash as to attempt any resistance: a superfluous recommendation, seeing that the whole population could not have mustered a single weapon, offensive or defensive, amongst them.

Passatore then called, one by one, on the principal personages who were present, and requested they would repair to their homes, under the escort of some of his men, and deliver up all their valuables.

While this was going on, none but those he named were permitted to leave the theatre.

As the booty was brought in, it was all deposited on the stage at his feet, until every one who had anything to lose had been laid under contribution. He then rose, bowed his thanks, and wishing them a "buon divertimento," retired.

His career is supposed to have ended in a skirmish with Austrian troops; but his body not having been secured by the conquerors, considerable mystery for a long time hung over his fate. The remnants of his band continued their old calling, and kept up the bad reputation of the roads in Romagna and the Marche. Near Ancona, country houses were often attacked; and in some districts, proprietors were fain to compromise with them for the payment of a certain sum annually. Not having any means of defending their property, they were completely at the brigands' mercy.

These facts ought to have furnished more food for melancholy than amusement; but they did not come amiss to the società. And thus laughing, talking, pausing in their play to relate some new evidence of their country's

miserable condition, or rallying each other upon an oversight in the game, the evening would pass on, with as many variations as the light and shadow cast by a tree stirred in the autumn wind ; and if I seem to shift waywardly from one subject to another in delineating the Italian character, it is that this apparent instability is required to give greater accuracy to my picture, and truthfulness to its details.

## CHAPTER XVI.

A visit to Macerata—The journey—The Marziani family—Volumnia the old maid—The Marchesa Gentilina's midnight communications.

I WAS invited to her house in the ancient and aristocratic city of Macerata, by the Marchesa Gentilina Marziani, a lady well known not only in the provincial circles of the Marche, but in those of Rome, where, in the lifetime of her first husband, who held one of those lucrative monopolies of the necessities of life which the Pontifical Government farms out to its adherents, she had occupied rather a conspicuous position. As a sort of protest against her sexagenarian lord's principles and party, to which and all else pertaining to him she had vowed opposition, the fair Gentilina delighted in assembling numbers of artists and men of letters, both native and foreign, under her

roof, where she promoted the discussion of political topics, and the free expression of opinion, by a hardihood and boldness of speech that none of the other members of the coterie would have dared to imitate, and on which the protection of her uncle, a wealthy cardinal, alone enabled her to venture with impunity.

When, after many weary years of wedlock, the death of the old *appaltatore* left her at liberty to form less irksome ties, the choice of the buxom and well-endowed widow, amidst a crowd of aspirants, fell upon the Marchese Alessandro Marziani, a young noble of Macerata, several years her junior, and with apparently little but his good looks and old name to recommend him. To universal surprise, the marriage proved on the whole a happy one. The marchese looked on his wife as a model of genius and wit; never questioned her opinions, though careful to avoid compromising himself by uttering any of his own; and grateful for the support she furnished to the declining fortunes of his house, and the grace with

which she consented to reside several months of each year with his family—thus enabling him to pay that dutiful attention to his father's old age which Italians are so solicitous to discharge—showed her a respect and esteem which amply atoned for the absence of shining qualities in himself.

In one of the visits to Ancona, whither a natural desire for change used occasionally to lead her, I made the marchesa's acquaintance; and, through the same seeking for variety, she was doubtless prompted to the novel experiment of introducing the *Signorina forestiera* into the heart of her husband's family, moulded after the most approved fashion of ancient Italian households.

Macerata is about forty miles distant from Ancona, on the high-road to Rome, finely situated on the loftiest point of a ridge of hills running midway between the sea and the grand chain of Apennines which form the noble background to most Italian scenery. Even at that early period of the year, the country through which we

passed was remarkable for its beauty and fertility; but the marchesa talked too much and too energetically to permit me to observe anything in detail; so that it was fortunate I was enabled some months later again to see, and thoroughly enjoy, what the natives, with pardonable pride, designate as "the Garden of Italy."

We travelled in the marchesa's carriage, a party of four, or rather five; for, in addition to her, her good-humoured spouse, and myself—the three *padroni*—there was the *cameriera*, whom they would have thought it most inhuman to have seated on the outside, and the parrot. This last occupied a great circular tin cage, and wore a dejected aspect, which perhaps arose from jealousy at his mistress engrossing the whole of the conversation, though the marchese attributed it to indisposition, and vainly strove to cheer him by proffering cakes and sugar, or his own finger to be pecked at, thus beguiling the tediousness of the well-known road; while his wife, charmed at having a new listener, held forth about the abuses of the

Government, the frauds of Cardinal Antonelli, the weakness of the Pope, and the insolence of the Austrians, requiring nothing beyond a shrug of the shoulders, or an affirmative groan, when she appealed to her husband to corroborate her statements. Every hour, at least, there was a stoppage at the foot of some hill, while cows or oxen were summoned from the nearest peasant's house to assist the horses in dragging us up these ascents, which for steepness exceed everything that can be imagined, except indeed the corresponding precipitousness of the declivity on the other side.

With this single drawback, the journey was very pleasant. We dined at Recanati, a very small but ancient town, crowning an eminence, like most of the cities in this country, which were built at a period when a position from whence a good view could be obtained of any advancing foe was an indispensable requisite for security; and here the parrot so far recovered his spirits, that the whole inn was thrown into ecstasy with his performances, which the marchesa,



from being seriously occupied with partaking of needful refreshment, allowed him to exhibit without a competitor. The *sala* in which we took our repast was crowded with an admiring audience, the beggars who infested the courtyard and stairs having also crept in unreprieved; and their comments and exclamations at every fresh proof of the *pappagallo's* loquacity seemed to afford unqualified pleasure to his owners, without any thought of offended dignity at the intrusion—such as would have disturbed the equanimity, and spoiled the digestion of British travellers — ever entering their minds.

It was night when we arrived at the Palazzo Marziani—a handsome pile of building, of a massive style of architecture, faced with large square slabs of marble, like the old Florentine palaces, wide balconies projecting from the windows, and a grand portico, surmounted by armorial bearings in *alto rilievo*, through which the carriage passed into a court that in olden time had evidently been surrounded by an open ar-

cade, with a fountain in the centre. The interstices between the columns, however, as a daylight view revealed, had been filled up with brickwork; the fountain no longer played; and the grass sprouted up in tufts between the pavement, or waved in rank luxuriance amid the rich cornices of the façade.

On one side of this piazza were the stables—perceptible, alas! to other senses besides the ocular—and on the opposite one rose the staircase, in broad and easy flights, with marble busts of various ancestors of the family in niches upon each landing. The apartments of the marchesa, as wife of the eldest son, were upon the first floor, and thither were we lighted, with great jubilee and welcome, by an old white-headed man in plain clothes—the *maestro di casa*, whose real name had merged into that of *Rococo*—and one or two subordinates in livery-coats of faded blue and yellow, just like the lackeys who come forward upon the stage in Italian theatres to carry away the moss-grown seat upon which the rustic prima-donna has been reclining.

The second brother, the Marchese Oliverotto Marziani, whose patronymic was a superfluity, inasmuch as I never heard him addressed by it;—his wife, the Marchesa Silvia, a quiet little body, with two or three children clinging to her side, the proprietorship of whom alone enabled her to make head against the overwhelming supremacy of her sister-in-law Gentilina;—the Marchesina Volunnia, the eldest daughter, unmarried, and with a great reputation for learning;—and, finally, a very old man, with a quavering voice and infirm gait, appeared to greet our arrival.

The brothers, both tall and handsome, fine specimens of the manly style of beauty of which this part of Italy retains the distinctive type, loudly kissed and brushed their black beards against each other with great affection, while the ladies embraced with clamorous demonstrations, but little warmth; and then, on the approach of his father, Alessandro, hastening to meet him, bent over his hand, and raised it to his lips with an air of unaffected tenderness and

respect. These salutations over, they all paid their compliments to the new-comer with great politeness, eyeing me all the time with very allowable curiosity, for I am sure it was the first occasion on which a foreigner and a heretic had ever come thus familiarly amongst them.

After this, supper being announced, we all betook ourselves to that meal, descending the grand cold staircase, already described, to the eating-room, which was on the ground-floor, in the vicinity of the kitchen, and not particularly remote from the stable. We were here joined by a priest, Don Ciriaco, who lived in the house as a sort of secretary and companion to the old marchese or *papà*, as they all called him, and imparted the rudiments of Latin and the Catechism to the children. He was evidently in a very servile position, being treated with perfect indifference by all assembled, except the Marchesa Silvia, who now and then addressed to him a few words, though always with an implied and unquestioned sense of his inferiority, which reminded me of

Macaulay's delineation of the footing of domestic chaplains in England at the close of the seventeenth century. Two of the children sat up to supper, one on each side of their mother, muffled in huge napkins tied round their chins, and completely engrossing her attention by the cutting up and preparing of their food.

I thought their presence at this meal was an indulgence conceded to celebrate their uncle and aunt's return, never dreaming that such a custom as infants of their tender age sitting up till past ten o'clock to eat heartily of soup, roast-meat, and salad—of which viands the repast consisted—could ever be habitual. Such, however, was the case; for no other reason, as the marchesa humorously confided to me, than its being in accordance with the practices of former days; which, to a mind so full of scruples as poor Silvia's, she added, were second only to the decrees of the Council of Trent or the dictates of her confessor. After hearing this, and ascertaining that in those families who partook of supper—some only indulging

in one ample meal in the middle of the day—the custom of the children joining in it was very general, it was not difficult to account for the variety of ailments with which the rising generation seemed afflicted, more especially the vermicular affections—in all the varied phenomena of which, from hearing them so constantly discussed, I became quite a proficient.

Being tired with our long day's journey, we were glad to retire to rest; and I was conducted to my room by the marchesa and the erudite Volunnia, who, I speedily found, was less occupied with lore than with the vanities and heart-burnings of her sex. My spinsterhood in this case, however, proved a passport to her affections: albeit nearly twenty years my senior, she took me to her heart, as her equal in age, and partner in misfortune—promising, as she kissed me at parting for the night, to summon me early in the morning, that she might have the pleasure of introducing me to her own apartments, books, and studies.

The marchesa lingered for a few more words.

"I need not tell you, *carina*, that poor Volunnia is a character. In fact, this whole family are originals. Nature formed my Alessandro different from all the rest, and evidently broke the mould that he was cast in.—First of all," she continued, raking up the embers in the scalding over which she was warming her hands, "there is that poor old papà, who, with his obstinacy and prejudice, has ruined himself by lawsuits. His celebrated *processo* against his brothers, I dare say you have already heard of: it lasted twenty-five years, because either side, whenever sentence was given in favour of its opponent, appealed to some other court, which, under our happy system, can annul the judgment previously pronounced. At last, this worse than siege of Troy drew near its close. The case had been brought before every tribunal in the Roman States, and was finally submitted by the last defeated party, papà's brothers, to the supreme court in Rome—the conclusive one of appeal

in such instances. My Alessandro was there, awaiting the result, but comparatively with little anxiety, so confident was he of success. *Poveretto*, he was too good. Had he known me then, I would have taken care things should turn out differently! The night before the judgment was to be pronounced, he was privately warned that unless he offered a large bribe to one of the prelates of the Rota, before whom the suit had been pleaded, it would be given against him; that the other side had bid high, and all he could do was to outbuy them! 'Bah! bah!' he said; 'this monsignore whose influence will have so much weight with the other *uditori* in our cause to-morrow is above all venal motives: he is too high in the church.' (He was one of those ecclesiastics, my dear, who wear violet stockings, and talk so sweetly to your fair compatriots in Rome.) 'O no,' he reasoned with his heart, *da galant' uomo*, 'the thing is impossible: it is merely a trick of the enemy,'—and so went to sleep without any misgiving. The next day"—snapping her fingers expressively—



“he found out his mistake, and the famous *causa* was irrevocably lost! Poor old papà—they tell me he has never been the same man since: the very want of the accustomed excitement must be a blank to him. Now and then he pricks up his ears, in the hopes of finding some source of litigation with his sons-in-law about his daughters’ portions, or searches out old family claims, which he wants to revive, and so on—but we take care nothing shall come of it. So he sits with Don Ciriaco, going over legal accounts and rummaging among title-deeds in the morning, and spends his afternoons in *conversazione* at the Casino, listening to all the stories people can remember of lawsuits as intricate and unfortunate as his own. All know his passion for such relations, and good-naturedly try to amuse him with them. The family affairs Alessandro takes care of now, and is really getting them into order. Though he says so little, he has a great head for business.”

To the marchesa’s honour, be it added, that it was not from herself I learned that

something beyond Alessandro's clever management had been requisite here, which she liberally supplied. But on the good services she thus rendered, as well as her own extensive charities, though so communicative in other respects, she was always silent; and, perfectly unostentatious in her dress and other personal expenses, never seemed conscious of being richer than any of her surrounding kindred.

But I have digressed, while the marchesa is still talking. "Volunnia, poor soul!" she went on, clearing her voice, I grieve to record, to the detriment of the floor—"Volunnia has been the chief sufferer by all these troubles. She was the eldest of the family, senior even to Alessandro, and considerably older than her sisters. While her parents were in all the *furore* of this lawsuit, they had no time to think about getting her married, or it was not convenient to bring forward a *dote* suitable to their position and reputed wealth. So years and years rolled by, and the *poverina* not augmenting in good looks, saw her chances

of being settled fast diminishing. It is ten years since I came into the family, and then she was nearly thirty-four! I soon found two *partiti* for the younger sisters; but as for Volunnia, though I have made immense researches, hitherto they have been without success. In fact, she is too full of instruction—at least the men think so, and they are afraid of her—and yet, with all her studies, she is consumed by mortification at not being married. As for Oliverotto, what you see him, that he is,—a *buon diavolo*—his only fault an unhappy propensity for play. He has already eaten up part of poor Silvia's dowry, which he managed to get into his hands. We have secured the rest now as well as we can, and he has promised to reform. But what will you have? With such a little stupid *bacchettona* (that is, bigot) as that for his wife, it is not surprising he should seek some distraction. Per Bacco!" she exclaimed, as the midnight chimes were heard, "I had no idea it was so late!" and lighting a small taper at my massive silver *lucerna*, the marchesa

at last retired, carrying with her the scaldino, and saying she would desire one of the women-servants to come and take my commands.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Comfortless bed-room—National fear of water—  
Waste of time—Occupations of the different  
members of the family—Volunnia's sitting-room  
—Her acquirements.

WHEN the marchesa was gone, I proceeded to take a survey of my apartment, which, had I not resolutely set aside all comparison with England and English customs, would have been mentally noted down as exceedingly uncomfortable. There was no fireplace or stove, no carpet on the stone floor, no curtains to the bed, at the head of which was placed a *bénitier* for holy water, a palm that had been blessed at Easter, and a little print of some saint. The rest of the furniture consisted of an old-fashioned inlaid chest of drawers, surmounted by a small looking-glass; four walnut-wood chairs, with cane seats; and a washing-stand, or

rather tripod, just holding the basin, and beneath it a very small jug. But what redeemed the otherwise meagre aspect of the room was the profusion of oil-paintings, in massive gilt frames, with which the walls were closely covered. Of many, the colours were too darkened by time, or they were hung too high, to enable me to make out their subjects; but, judging from those I could more easily distinguish, I concluded the collection related either to the martyrdoms of saints, in their most varied form of suffering—one picture especially quite disturbed me, St. Apollonia kneeling, a tray full of bleeding teeth in one outstretched hand, while she clasps the instrument employed in their extraction to her breast with the other—or to scenes from mythology, singularly inappropriate—all evidently belonging to the school of Bologna, which, diffused by the numerous pupils of the Caracci, is the predominant one in the Marche.

The meagreness of the lavatory arrangements, I confess, however, no pictorial em-

bellishments could redeem; and I made interest with the good-humoured girl who speedily came to offer her services, to bring me that British desideratum, a tub, which for the period of my stay should be considered exclusively as mine. She was much puzzled at first at this request.

"Is the signorina ill?—has she taken cold, that she wishes, *con rispetto parlando*, to have a foot-bath?"

It is a curious but authentic fact, that in the middle and south of Italy feet or foot gear are never spoken of without a prefatory apologetic expression, such as, "saving your presence," "with all respect," and so forth. The most inadmissible topics, to our way of thinking, are unblushingly discussed, but an Italian will pause in a story to ask your pardon for mentioning his boots.

"No, I am not ill," I said, laughing; "but it is the custom of the English to be very fond of washing."

"Madonna mia! signorina! Be careful. Too much may disagree with you. Shall I bring you a little white wine to mix with

the water? The Marchesa Silvia always does so when the children require to be washed. The baby is sometimes bathed in broth."

I was so amused I could scarcely decline with becoming gravity.

"At least for your face, signorina: with that fine complexion"—remember, reader, her mission as a waiting-maid was to flatter—"you surely do not risk spoiling it with water. A little *brodo lungo* (weak broth) of lean veal, every particle of fat carefully skimmed off—that is what many ladies in Macerata use; it softens, and yet nourishes the skin. Others have a custom of spreading a handkerchief out at night to imbibe the early dew, and then gently rub their faces with it, soaked as it is with the cooling moisture; but that can only be done in summer. Then there is milk just warm from the cow—some prefer it to anything else. Would the signorina at least try that?"

But as I was deaf to all her persuasions, the abigail at last left me to repose, having first inquired whether she was to bring me



[illegible][illegible]

gifts, tormenting, or even fatal to their possessor.

Italians are not great sleepers in general, and several members of the family, after the early cup of black coffee, would be dawdling about their rooms in dressing-gown and slippers, though not visible till after the second refection of *café au lait* which was served to me, with a little round plateful of cakes, on a waiter of silver, richly chased, but rarely cleaned. Amongst the early ones were papà, who rose with the lark to pursue, barnacles on nose, his legal researches ; the marchesa, who carried on a tolerable amount of letter-writing with political malcontents—the manœuvres and harmless intrigues attending which were an indispensable stimulus to her existence—though, for the sake of Alessandro, as well as to avoid the unpleasantness of banishment or sequestration, she took care to eschew directly compromising herself or any of her correspondents ; and Silvia, engaged from morning to night with the children, who were bribed with sweet-meats to be quiet, deluded by promises of

visionary rewards into submission when rebellious, and taught to wreak their vengeance on the chairs and tables whenever they gave themselves a knock. Besides the two small individuals I had seen at supper to claim their mother's care, there was a most important personage wholly dependent on her—an uninteresting infant of eight months old, just released from his swaddling-clothes, and already attired in high frocks, long sleeves and trousers; the light costume peculiar to English babies, technically termed "short coats," being looked upon, it may interest British mothers to know, as exceedingly incorrect.

As to the others, they appeared at different hours, Oliverotto the latest: he never showed himself till noon, when, dressed in a very elaborate morning costume, he sauntered out to the caffè to hear the news, play a game at billiards, and get an appetite for dinner. The good Alessandro always went to *far due passi*, and have a little conversazione before three o'clock also, but then he had been busy for two or three hours in his *scrittojo* with

the *fattore* or bailiff, who was his prime-minister in the complicated family concerns. The revenues of landed proprietors in this country, as I have already explained in detail, being derived from the division of the produce of their farms with the peasants by whom they are cultivated, much vigilance is required in looking after the different *contadini*, and ascertaining that each one sends in the *padrone's* moiety of wine, oil, wheat, and Indian corn, without more speculation than is inevitable ; which done, there is the care of disposing of the stores of grain and other articles of consumption, which, after retaining what is necessary for the household, the possidente sells to traders, either for home supply or foreign exportation.

According to her promise, Volunnia came to fetch me, that I might be introduced in form to her own apartments, which were on the second floor. On our way to them, we passed through the two saloons and large entrance-hall appropriated to the *marchesa*, which had evidently been the state-rooms of the palazzo in its palmy days, and in their

general arrangements resembled others of the same description with which I had become familiar in Ancona: gilded sofas and arm-chairs, covered with faded damask, stationed immovably along the walls, a profusion of pictures and carved *consoles*, embellished by tall mirrors. In the one, where she told me her sister-in-law habitually received, there were a few modern additions, some light chairs, a round table, strewn with such newspapers as she could contrive to get together, and a number of little squares of carpet placed in array before the grim, high-backed seats, that seemed to look frowningly on these tokens of that modern degeneracy which shrank from contact with the marble floor whereon, in their day, the feet of the best and fairest had contentedly reposed.

Volunnia's sitting-room contained tokens of her tastes and attainments, which, to do her justice, were of no common order, especially when it is borne in mind how much difficulty she must have overcome in acquiring the accomplishments of which a piano, or rather spinet, a harp, and a number of

paintings on ivory, gave the indication—to say nothing of the severer studies that a score or two of Latin and old French and English authors, on a dusty book-shelf, revealed to my gaze.

After she had played a sonata from Paesiello, and taken down some of her paintings, framed in those circles of ebony familiar to our childhood as containing effigies of old gentlemen in bag-wigs and white frills, for my approving inspection; after reading aloud a page of English to show me her proficiency, and obtaining a promise that I would give her a lesson every day while I remained there; after permitting me to turn over her books in the vain hope of finding anything more modern than Young's *Night Thoughts* and the *Spectator* in the English department, or Pascal and Madame de Sévigné in the French, while she proffered, as some light reading in Italian, Alfieri's translation of Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline*—after, I say, all these preliminaries, Volunnia laid aside her homage to the Sacred Nine, and, betaking herself to a minute inspection of

my toilet, seemed more intent upon a sacrifice to the graces, than the singular *négligé* of her attire had at first led me to anticipate.

Having made her very happy by the assurance that she might have whatever she liked in my wardrobe copied for her own wear, she took me into her bedroom to see an elaborate bonnet that had just come from Rome, which she intended to appear in at Easter. As she tried it on complacently, the droll effect of the smart *coiffure* over the dingy wrapper and coarse woollen shawl pinned round her throat to conceal all sorts of deficiencies, irresistibly reminded me of Miss Charity Pecksniff in the wedding-bonnet and dimity bed-gown. The one in question was a bright yellow, and Volunnia asked me, as she adjusted it before the glass, whether it did not become her complexion, which, she had been told, was quite Spanish in its tints.

Of course I did not disturb the harmless conceit, and we went down stairs to turn over my stock of finery as lovingly as possible.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Volunnia's inquisitiveness—Her strictures on English propriety—The Marchesa Silvia's dread of heretics—The dinner—The Marchesa Gentilina knits stockings and talks politics.

I WAS very much diverted, during the investigation of my wardrobe, at noticing how keenly Volunnia eyed the make and quality of my garments, as if furnishing some clue to my position in society ; still further to elucidate which, she proceeded to a diligent cross-examination respecting my birth, parentage, and the reasons which had brought me so far from my own country.

Strange as it may seem, there was nothing I felt disposed to take offence at in these interrogatories. They showed so much ignorance of the world beyond the narrow limits in which she lived ; so much curiosity to learn something of a country that, despite





proofs of his excellence and fitness for the charge?"

I had not weighed all these important considerations, I told her gravely—nevertheless had no fear, in the event of their being mooted, that any unpleasant remarks could be applied to my stay with my relations in Ancona.

"I suppose you know best, carina; but a person who contemplates marriage has certainly a right to be particular as to the previous proceedings of the young lady who may be proposed to him as a wife—and who can satisfy the doubts of a man in such a case? With us, believe me, the injury to a woman's prospects would be incalculable."

I rejoined meekly, that in England it was not usual, and, above all, not deemed advisable, for persons to enter into matrimony without such knowledge of each other's characters, and mutual trust and confidence, as rendered it impossible that suspicions like those she hinted at could ever be entertained.

“You are a singular people, you English!” she exclaimed; “such licence allowed women when single—such severity shown towards them when married. I saw a little of your manners several years ago, when I spent a winter with my parents in Rome. Alas! we were drawn thither by that ill-fated *processo*, and became acquainted with a family of your compatriots. I was astonished! Young men were allowed to come constantly in the evening to the house, and would stand by the piano while the young ladies played, and turn over the leaves of their music-books, or assist them in the duties of the tea-table, laughing and talking without the least restraint; nay, more, hold tête-à-tête conversations over an embroidery-frame or a chess-board, while the mother sat at the other end of the room, perfectly indifferent as to what they might be saying.”

“Because she, doubtless, had confidence that neither the young Englishmen she permitted to visit at her house would dream of uttering, nor her daughters so far forget themselves as to listen to a

single word incompatible with the strictest propriety."

"Precisely : that is what this lady said when my poor mother, *buon' anima*, ventured some remark on these proceedings, so singular to our eyes. Then, what astonished us exceedingly was the great familiarity with their brothers, by whom I have frequently seen them kissed, without any motive—such as saying farewell before a long absence, or a return from a journey—to authorize it ; while they were permitted to walk or ride out without any other escort—one or two of the sons' most intimate friends sometimes even joining them ; the mother calmly acquiescing, nay, encouraging them, by saying her sons were the natural guardians of their sisters, and would admit no one to their society unworthy of that distinction ! But the crowning stroke of all was when a marriage was combined with some *milor* for one of the young ladies, or rather when she had combined it for herself—for he spoke to *her* before declaring himself to the parents—she was allowed to take his arm on the Pincian Hill or the Villa Borghese, with only a

sister or a young brother of nineteen or twenty as a chaperon; and I myself have seen them, under their mother's very eyes, stand for half-an-hour in the evening on a balcony, under pretence of looking at the moonlight, and unconsciously turning my head in that direction, I could not help witnessing . . . Ahem!" Volunnia blushed and hesitated.

"A little of the same proceeding you had objected to in the brothers?"

"You are right! At the moment I was so amazed I hardly dared tell my mother what I had beheld; she would have been too much scandalized!"

"And yet you did not count it worthy of remark, among your own Roman friends, to see a young woman, but two or three years married, surrounded by a bevy of admirers; carrying the arts of coquetry to their utmost height, and taking pride in inspiring attachments and receiving declarations which would be esteemed an insult to a modest English wife. And you did not feel shocked, when the first novelty of her gay life was over—when the society

from which she had been shut out in her girlhood had lost its intoxicating influence—to hear of her exchanging the homage of the many for the exclusive devotion of a recognized *cavaliere*, replacing, by his daily assiduities, the presence of a husband who has found similar occupations for himself elsewhere! *Scusi*, Signora Volunnia: you are at liberty to call us a strange people, but permit me to say our system, even taken from your own point of view, is a thousand times preferable to yours.”

“*Via, via*,” she replied; “you exaggerate a little. What you say might be applicable fifty years ago, when it used to be stipulated in the marriage-contract that the wife should have but one *cavaliere servente*, and the husband often selected a friend whom he thought trustworthy for that office. But things have changed now: it is no longer looked upon as indispensable; and I could tell you of several ladies of my acquaintance who have never had a *cavaliere*, nor the shadow of one. My own mother, dear soul! I can cite as an instance

—a remarkable one, I admit, for the period when she was young—but then she had a singular affection for my father, who on his side was always ready to accompany her to the theatre or the casino; or else, as I myself remember, whenever she was indisposed, for two or three hours together would sit in her room, talking most agreeably: altogether, he showed extreme amiability in paying her those little attentions which others, less fortunate in their marriage, are glad to receive from their *cavalieri*. Then take Silvia for another example: I do not think she has ever had an idea upon the subject; in fact, she has no taste for amusements, and never cares for anything except her children and her religious duties, in which last, indeed, she is exemplary.”

The conversation was here interrupted by a servant coming to inquire whether the marchesina intended to drive or walk before dinner, which reminded her of the lateness of the hour, and the necessity of retiring to dress. About one o'clock, the ladies of the family went out—not together,

nor indeed frequently, 'except Silvia, who daily repaired with her pale children and two nurses to an avenue of trees outside the gates of the town, where they descended from the carriage, and crawled up and down for an hour or so, and then drove home again.

The marchesa seldom cared to leave the house; she always had visitors at that hour, and preferred talking to any other exercise. Volunnia was the only one who found any pleasure in a walk—a taste in which she had no sympathy from the other members of the family, as even her brothers never dreamed of going further than the caffè, or, at the utmost, a few steps upon the public promenade. She was, therefore, glad to enlist me as a companion, and, followed by one of the liveried attendants, who was especially dedicated to Volunnia's service—being her nurse in sickness as well as body-guard in health—we took several walks in the environs of Macerata. Sometimes, too, I went with the marchesa to pay visits; and once or twice, to propitiate Silvia, I accepted her invitation to drive with her and the



children ; but we never became cordial. I was too much at variance with all her preconceived ideas of propriety ever to find favour in her eyes ; besides, my being a Protestant was an insurmountable disqualification. I accidentally discovered she firmly believed that the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of animals was a dogma of the Church of England—a conclusion founded upon the circumstance, that some years before, an English family holding this theory had resided in Macerata, where they excited much notice by purchasing and fondly cherishing sundry diseased horses, half-starved sheep, and other suffering quadrupeds, in whom, they declared, dwelt the spirits of their departed relations. Silvia could never quite believe that I did not hold this tenet. She did not, indeed, like conversations on such subjects ; and once, when I said something laughingly in allusion to myself, thus retorted, “ Well, what does it signify, after all ? You do not pray to the Madonna, so the rest matters little.” And on my offer-

ing to lend her an Italian translation of the English Prayer-book, she shrunk back, colouring deeply, and abruptly declined.

But stay, it is three o'clock, and Rococo stands with a napkin under his arm, knocking at each door—"Eccellenza in tavola." And their excellencies being very hungry, no time is lost in assembling in the room down stairs, where the parrot, on a lofty perch, is sounding the note of preparation with right good-will. "Presto! Presto! La Zuppa. Ho fame—Ho fame!"—he exclaims in shrill accents, flapping his wings, while the family, hastily crossing themselves, are taking their places, and addressing each other in voices almost as piercing to the ear; for the high key in which Italians carry on their familiar discourse is one of the peculiarities to which an English person finds it the most difficult to become reconciled.

The large table is very simply laid; the dinner-service is of the plainest white-ware, and the glass is equally ordinary. Between every two places there is a bottle of wine—

the growth of their own vineyards—and a decanter of water; and beneath every napkin a small loaf of bread. In the centre, a number of small dishes are disposed in a circle, called the *ghirlanda*: these contain anchovies, caviare, olives, Bologna sausage cut into thin slices, butter, pickles, and raw ham, and are partaken of after the soup; broth, thickened with semolina, has been served out from a sideboard by the *maestro di casa*, and handed by the other servants, of whom there are three in attendance. Then are brought round, successively, boiled fowls stuffed with chestnuts; fried fish; roast lamb; a pie of cox-combs and brains, with a sweet crust; polenta—Indian-corn meal—in a form enshrining stewed birds, and seasoned with Parmesan cheese; onions dressed *all' agro dolce* with vinegar and sugar; and, lastly, chocolate cream—each dish being carved, where carving is necessary, by Rococo.

When these comestibles have been fully done justice to, the cloth is swept, the *ghirlanda* is removed, and the dessert, in the

same sort of white dishes, put upon table: apples and pears piled together, oranges opposite; cheese and celery—all taken indiscriminately on the same plate.

The repast occupies a long time, for tongues, as well as knives and forks, are busy, and as great an amount of talking as of eating is got through. Being the first general gathering of the day, there is all the out-door gossip, as well as domestic intelligence, reciprocally to be imparted. In the conversation, the servants even occasionally join, volunteering an opinion as to whether it will rain the next quarter of the moon, or announcing that the Signora Marchesa So-and-so is laid up with a toothache, or that Monsignor the Bishop has the gout; and as for Rococo, he is continually appealed to, being evidently recognized as an authority by the whole house.

In conclusion, finger-glasses, with slices of lemon floating in the water, are presented to us, and we adjourn to the marchesa's drawing-room, where coffee is served; and after a few minutes, the majority dis-

perse—Silvia to her babes, the priest to his breviary, Volunnia to her bower. Papa calls for his cloak and stick, and departs for the casino, leaning on the arm of Oliverotto, who, having dutifully accompanied his father thither, adjourns to the caffè, and will probably not reappear in the bosom of his family until supper.

I remain with the marchesa and Alessandro, who always passes the early hours of the evening at home, only going out to pay some accustomed visit or look in at the casino, from eight to ten, at which early hour, to their great discomfort, they sup on account of papa. It soon grows dark, and a large *lucerna* is brought in, before which the servant adjusts a green shade, effectually precluding the possibility of reading or working by its light, except, indeed, that marvellous knitting which the marchesa carries on mechanically, never looking at her needles, and yet producing all sorts of complicated patterns for her stockings, the fabrication of which is her sole manual employment.

It is unusually cold for the middle of February, and there is a contention about the fire, which they insist upon lighting out of compliment to me; but this I stoutly refuse, knowing that every indisposition of the family or their visitants for the next fortnight at least would be attributed to it. So I wrap myself in a large shawl, have a *cassetta* filled with live embers for my feet, and feel quite comfortable. But I must learn to knit too, for then I shall be able to keep my attention from wandering while the marchesa talks, and really she is worth listening to, though Alessandro yawns so audibly. She is holding forth warmly against the English Government for having deluded the Italians, and especially the Sicilians, by encouraging them to revolt in 1848, and abandoning them to their fate when defeated in 1849. It is indeed a sorry tale, and there is little to be said in extenuation, though naturally one tries to make the best of it. Not with me, not with the English people, is she angry, the marchesa over and over again repeats; it is

with that cold selfishness which is here considered the blot upon English policy in all its relations with foreign nations.

There is a ring at the bell! Alessandro rouses himself. It is past six. The friends who form the *conversazione* begin to arrive, each person staying from one to two hours, according to the number of other houses at which he also habitually visits. Though they come every evening, they never shake hands, at least not those of the old *régime*, and they have always something new to say.

## CHAPTER XIX.

A conversazione verbatim—Admiration for Piedmont—An attack of banditti—The Marchesa describes the actual wretchedness of the country—Cardinal Antonelli's addition to the calendar year—Monopoly of the Corn trade—Entrance of the Knight of Malta.

THE conversazione, in its outward features, I have elsewhere sufficiently dwelt upon; but its portraiture of domestic life, of fettered thoughts, of quaint opinion, as exhibited in one evening at the Palazzo Marziani, I would fain reproduce for the English reader, who may probably live to see the day when a mighty revolution will uproot all traces of the system of society feebly, though truthfully, mirrored in these pages.

I should, however, be sorry to convey any idea of the ponderous formality of some of the frequenters of the Marchesa Gentilina's circle; or the fatiguing effect which the un-





still too rare to have any influence in modifying the old-fashioned tone of conversation.

Then the budget of news would be unfolded, and every murder or highway robbery within the circuit of fifty miles, every accident that has taken place in the town that day, is as circumstantially related as if a reporter from Scotland Yard had been in attendance. Next, there are the maladies of all their invalid acquaintances to be discussed; while any remarkable complaint amongst members of the *mezzo cetto* and shopkeepers, whom of course they all know by sight and name, is also gratefully admitted to the general repository. Add to these the births, present or anticipated, in the high world of Macerata, and, above all, the marriages—an unfailing source of speculation and interest—and a tolerable idea may be formed of the home department of the Colloquial Gazette, which supplies the place of newspapers and weekly periodicals, &c., to an Italian interior. The foreign intelligence is almost equally well supplied,

though not so widely, or, more properly speaking, not so unreservedly communicated. How they contrived to know all they did of what was passing in other countries, considering that the newspapers allowed to be circulated only gave the official report of some events, and pertinaciously ignored others, was always a surprise to me, though fully weighing the stimulus to inquiry of which the Government's senseless restrictions were naturally productive.

But this information, as I have remarked, was not common to all, nor dispensed to all equally. The happy possessor of any contraband political novelty could be detected by his air of mysterious importance, his unwonted sententiousness, his impatience till the one or two old *codini*, who had devolved like family heir-looms upon the marches, had taken their leave; when it would be related, with the accompaniment of many gleeful expressive gestures, how such and such tidings had been received, that must have been like gall and wormwood to the existing powers.

Piedmont—constitutional Piedmont, progressist Piedmont—generally furnished the substance of these discourses. One day it would be whispered that a law was being contemplated in that contumacious little kingdom, for the suppression of many among the monastic orders; another, that its clergy were rendered amenable to civil tribunals for offences unconnected with ecclesiastical discipline: or else it would be ecstatically reported that the minister Cavour snapped his fingers at the threatened interdict, and answered the vituperation of the exiled Archbishop of Turin by fresh concessions to liberty of conscience. These graver themes were but interludes, however. As if fearful of lingering too long upon them, they used to pass to more trivial subjects with strange versatility, though losing no opportunity of levelling a shaft against their own Government, and inveighing at the existing and daily-increasing grievances, which not even the respectable codini any longer attempted to defend.

The marchesa's *società* had not more than

few or two unwelcome frequenters. But in a small town like Macerata, where most of the ladies resided, this was considered quite a brilliant circle. No refreshments of any kind were served or thought of, and no other light was supplied than what the *lucerna* furnished. If the reader, who has followed me through my first lay in the bosom of the Marziani family, likes to hear something of its conclusion, he may fancy himself seated on a brocaded chair in that *arrete*—he need not fear being discovered, the *lucerna's* rays do not penetrate so far—he may put on his cloak if he is cold—there. I have pushed a little square of carpet towards him for his feet, while for the first time he *osmala*, to use a foreign idiom, at a genuine Italian conversation.

"Has the marchesa heard of the strange adventure at the Villa D——, two nights ago?" inquired a young physician, who, uniting some poetical to a considerable share of medical reputation, had the *entrée* to the palazzo, which its mistress was only restrained by the fear of compromising her

husband, from throwing open to all the disaffected professional men in Macerata and its environs. "The house was attacked soon after midnight by a number of banditti, some of them with fire-arms, of which the people left in charge were of course destitute—our new-year's gift from the Austrian general having been, as you remember, a peremptory refusal to our petition that country-houses in isolated situations might retain one or two fowling-pieces as a defence. Well, the wind was high, so that the unfortunate inmates feared their cries for help, and the ringing of the alarm-bell, would be alike unheard; while the robbers, finding the coast clear, after having, luckily enough, lost a good deal of time in trying to force open the strongly-secured house-door, be-thought themselves of *undermining* it. They had almost finished their labours, when the storm beginning to lull, the beleaguered garrison succeeded in attracting attention. A picket of *finanzieri* (custom-house officers) who chanced to be patrolling, on the lookout for smugglers, hastened to their assist-

ance; and the enemy, hearing them approach, precipitately dispersed."

"*Ehi poveri noi!*" sighed the old Marchese Testaferrata, the strongest advocate of retrogradism in the società, "we are indeed in a bad case! The boasted improvements of this century, its fine liberalism, its socialism, its toleration to heretics, ahem, ahem! —it is all being visited now upon us! I grant you, yes, even I confess, that this military law is a little severe. But if we had not this, ugh! we should have worse. *This* is what the Mazziniani would give us, if they could. *We* can speak of that with some experience, *ehi?*" and tapping his heart with his forefinger, to denote stabbing, he then extended it horizontally as an emblem of shooting; after which he drew in his two hollow cheeks, so as to form a still greater cavity, and slowly nodding his head, looked as if he thought quite enough had been said upon so unpleasant a subject.

The young doctor shrugged his shoulders; the marchesa took up the gauntlet.

“If we had not this! *Per Bacco*, you are right, we *should* have worse. If the Austrians go on in this way, who will reap the harvest of the odium they have plentifully sown? Why, the priests, of course, whom they are now supporting with their bayonets and the stick! *They* are safe from popular vengeance. What has an army like theirs to fear? But let their backs be once turned—let the last sail of the fleet which will bear them from our shores have sunk beneath the horizon, and who can estimate the violence with which the torrent, so long forcibly restrained, will break forth? Who can assign any limits to popular fury under provocation, such as daily, weekly, yearly, is crying to Heaven for redress? And who will be the sufferers along with the priests? Why, we nobles, of course, whom the people, right or wrong, identify with them, and hate with equal hatred.”

“*Per carità, marchesa,*” interposed a very timorous-looking little man, turning pale, and wiping his forehead, “let us not speak of such things. Those who have outlived



the Reign of Terror of '49, have reasonable grounds for not expecting to see anything so horrible again. Besides, we are all friends here; but still, walls have ears."

"It cannot be denied, however, that we are in a cruel position," said a quiet, benevolent-looking man, with a stoop of the shoulders, and a great weakness of sight—the latter an appanage of old descent in many of the noble families in the Marche. "It is quite true that the people place us in the same category with the priests, while the priests drain us like a sponge! We shall have soon to choose between the excesses of Mazzinianism or beggary. This additional claim for the land-tax from us poor *possidenti*—coming after the long-standing prohibition to sell our grain for foreign exportation, and the losses consequent upon the low price at which we have been compelled to dispose of it—is really almost too much for mortal patience to endure."

"Come, come? What do you mean?"

cried old Testaferrata, one of the largest landed proprietors in the country. "I pay the bi-monthly tax upon the produce of my estates every two months in anticipation. It is heavy enough already, in all conscience; but I remember an army of occupation cannot be maintained for nothing, and they who necessitated the Austrians being here, are those we have to thank for it. *Ma, ma*, I think we bear our part sufficiently. You surely do not mean to say anything more is expected from us?"

"*Caro mio*," answered the lady of the house, "in this extremity, miraculous powers have developed themselves to aid the suffering church. The calendar year, without disturbing the order of nature, will henceforth consist of fourteen months! No *new* measure is in contemplation; tranquillize yourself on this point; simply, we are to pay seven *bimestri*, instead of six, as heretofore, to supply the exhausted coffers of the treasury—or, in more straightforward terms, to line the pockets of a certain *eminentissimo* and his amiable relations."

"Impossible! impossible!" groaned the poor codino; "it is too hard. Surely, some distinction should be made."

"Without arguing upon differences of opinion," mildly remarked the good Alessandro, whose office it was to spread oil upon the troubled waters of political discussion, "I am sorry to assure you, marchese, that what Gentilina tells you is too true. You may always trust to her sources of information."

"Yes, he is right," said the marchesa, looking at her husband with a pleased expression. "Alessandro knows I have never misled him yet in any news of this kind; and you will see that, at the end of this month, although you paid punctually at the beginning of last, you will be again summoned to do so; and then, just as if it was in the proper course of things, your usual *bimestre* will, a few days afterwards, be called for!"

By way of parenthesis, I must state that the correctness of the marchesa's information, in the course of a few days, was fully

demonstrated, while this singular arrangement is still continued yearly.

“But this is not the worst,” she continued. “Our good Conte Muzio there”—indicating the quiet man who had first alluded to the increased taxation—“lamented our losses by this long prohibition upon the exporting corn-trade—a measure rendered indispensable, we were told, by the fears entertained respecting a scarcity after next harvest; so, although commerce languished, and in the seaports thousands of people were thrown out of their usual employment, we did not complain, but acquiesced in its necessity. We sold our grain meantime—at low prices, it is true—but still we sold. There was a silent, yet almost a simultaneous demand for it all over the country. Once or twice, I had my misgivings, and asked who the buyers could be, and what part of the State it was principally intended to supply. ‘The interior, the interior,’ was always the answer. There was nothing to say against that. Notwithstanding, I remarked once or twice to Alessandro: ‘There will be some

*diavoleria* here yet.' Now my words have come true! The prohibition is removed for a limited period; the ports are open again. At Civita Vecchia it is known to-day; the welcome news will reach Ancona to-morrow morning. For a moment, there will be great joy. The merchants will scour the country to buy grain, but there is nothing left for them. It has all been sold—sold unsuspectingly into the hands of one person, the Cardinal Antonelli's brother. He has it all—a perfect monopoly of the corn-trade. Ha! ha! was it not cleverly done? There will be just time given for it to be all shipped, and then down comes another courier. The ports are once more closed, and the curtain falls upon the brother—or somebody else—chuckling over a few hundred thousand dollars he has realized by this pretty little transaction."

"I cannot believe that till I have seen it," said Testaferrata.

"You need not shake your head, marchese," she retorted; "it is as true as that we are all sitting here. As for ourselves,

nobody forced us to sell our corn; so, although to a certain degree we have been dupes, I see no particular cause of complaint. But it is the juggling, the pretence of sparing the country's resources, only to drain them tenfold more than by legitimate commerce, which it stirs my bile to contemplate! And if the coming harvest is *not* plentiful, and the price of bread rises in the autumn, what will become of the miserable population, already poor enough?"

The entrance of another personage at this moment gave an opportune turn to the conversation. The new-comer was a handsome, graceful young man about thirty, with an ease and sprightliness of manner that was remarkably opposed to the formality and ceremoniousness of those who had previously appeared. He was hailed with evident pleasure by the whole società; and the marchesa, with an exclamation of joy, gave him her hand to kiss, and inquired what good-fortune had sent her dear Checchino (the diminutive of Francesco) down from Rome.

"I am only here *di passaggio*, dear lady!

My duty summons me to Ancona, to await our grand-master, who is expected there next week from Venice; and my affection prompted me to leave Rome a few days earlier than necessary, that I might stop at Macerata with my friends."

While the marchesa asked half-a-dozen questions in a breath about her Roman acquaintances, Alessandro, who had not yet gone out, told me, *sotto voce*, that this Checchino was a young cousin of theirs, a knight of Malta, whom they were all very fond of.

"A knight of Malta?" I answered, surveying him with increased interest. "I had fancied the order no longer existed."

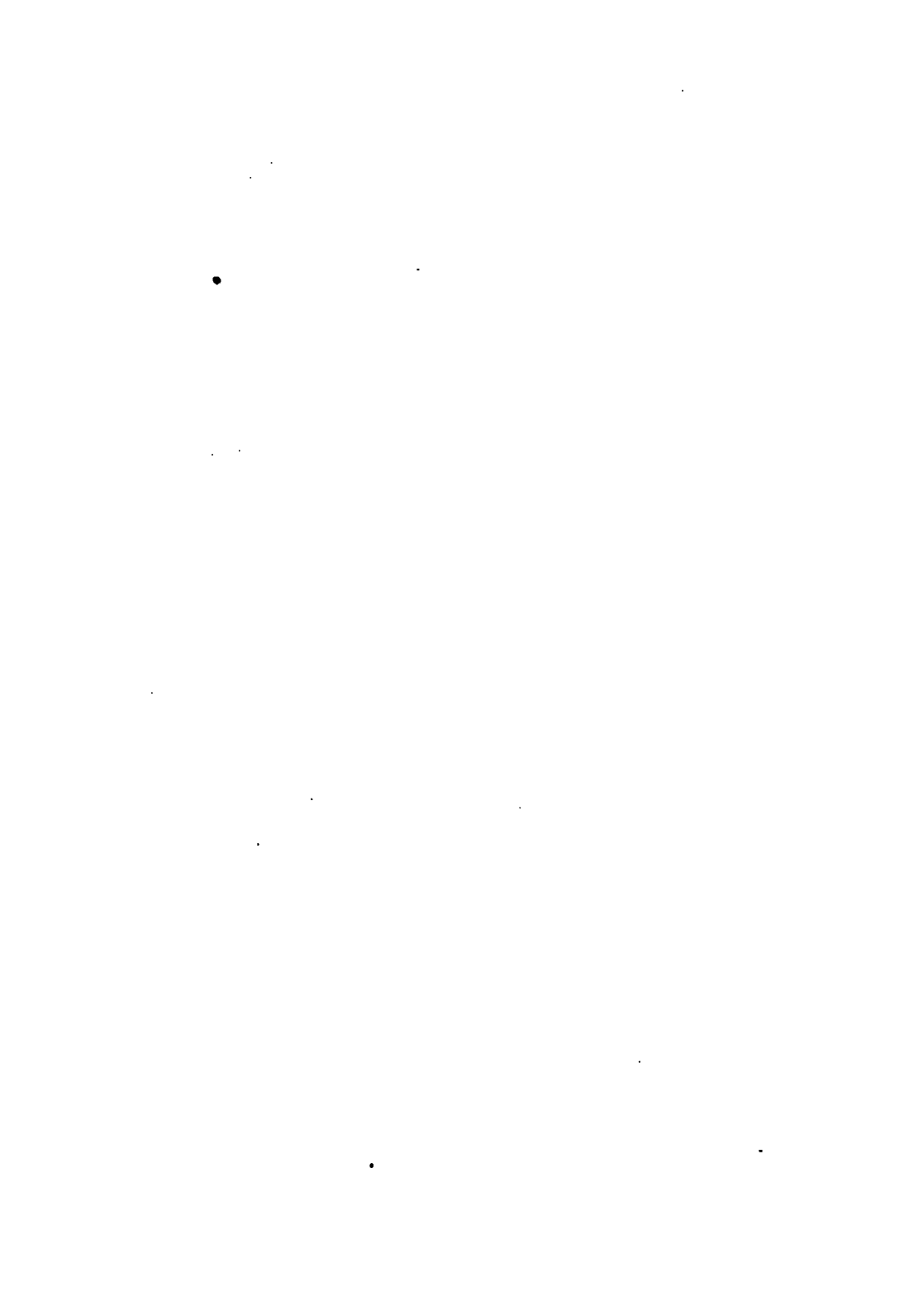
"No more it ought, to say the truth. You should hear Gentilina rave about it," he said, raising his eyebrows, and emitting a sibilating sound from his lips, to denote the excess of her eloquence; "and I cannot deny that she has reason. It is *un voto iniquo*, a wicked, unnatural vow—an order which, if I were Pope, I would abolish the very first hour of my reign. The knights of Malta are rich; they have large revenues :

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Checchino receives one thousand dollars a year (£200), and has his apartments rent-free in the palace of the Order in the Via Condotti in Rome, besides other advantages ; so, for a single man, he is amply provided for. Then it is a distinction in society ; only members of the best families are admitted ; and a *cavaliere di Malta* is fit company for kings. But he cannot marry : he is bound by a vow as irrevocable as that of priests or friars, although exposed to far greater temptations ; for he may go to every ball, theatre, or concert in Rome, or wherever he may be, without censure. He dances, he dresses in the height of fashion, he pays court, and yet he cannot marry—anything but that ! What will you have ? Gentilina has too much justice in all she says ! ”



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